

A
DISCOURSE
OF
PRAYER:

WHEREIN

This great Duty is stated, so as to
oppose some Principles and Practices of

Papists and **Fanaticks**;

As they are contrary to the Publick Forms
of the Church of *England*, established by her
Ecclesiastical Canons, and confirmed by

ACTS of

PARLIAMENT.

By *THOMAS PITTIS*, D.D. one of His
Majesties Chaplains in Ordinary.

*Wherefore, that way and profession in Religion, which
gives the best directions for it, (viz. Prayer) with
the most effectual motives to it, and most aboundeth
in its observance, hath therein the advantage of all
others. Dr. Owen in his Preface to his late Dis-
course of the Work of the Holy Spirit in
Prayer, &c.*

*London, Printed by B. W. for Edw. Vize next Shop
but one to Popes-head-Alley over against the
Royal Exchange in Cornhill. 1683.*

A
DISCOURSE
OF
PRAYER:

TO MY WORTHY
This great Duty is feared, so as to
opposite some Principles and Practices of
Ignorance and Enthusiasm;
As they are contrary to the Publick Forms
of the Church of England, and established by her
ecclesiastical Canons and confirmed by
United in ACTS of

PARLIAMENT.

BY THOMAS PITTES D.D. one of His
Most Excellent Majesty's Chaplains in Ordinary.

It is to be desired, that every Christian in Religion, which
right the best advantage for it, (viz. Prayer) with
the most effectual manner to it, and most advantage
in the best manner, shall therein the advantage of all
others. Dr. Pittes in his Preface to his last Dis-
course of the Work of the Holy Spirit in
Prayer, &c.

Printed by S. W. for Edm. B. the near Shop
in St. Pauls Church-yard, over against the
North Entrance, in 1722.

~~The Epistle Dedicatory~~
~~and the King's~~
~~Dedication consisting of~~
~~which has been lately~~
To my loving Parishioners of the
Parish of *S. Borolp* without *Bi-*
shopsgate. And also to the Inha-
bitants of the Parish of *Christ-*
Church, together with those of
S. Leonard Foster-Lane in *London*,
by the late Act of Parliament
united, my very kind, constant,
and Gentile Benefactors.

Gentlemen,

Though I have a Pa-
tron, who is your
Bishop, and mine
too, to whom I acknowledge
the utmost of what I can per-
form to be due; (next God

The Epistle Dedicatory

and the King) Yet this Discourse consisting of that which has been lately Preached to you in the same order in which, for fashion sake, it is here published in a small Treatise ; I hope I may more effectually serve you at this time, by presenting those things to your perusal, which the most of you have with kindness heard from the Pulpit. By our Honourable and Right Reverend Bishops Patronage, and your favour, I have had the credit, and advantage too, of Preaching, on the Lords daies, at both ends of
your

The Epistle Dedicatory.

your City; And what influence, by Gods blessing, Christian and Loyal Discourses have had upon many of you, your publick actions have eminently discovered. And therefore, without any farther complement, I adventure to dedicate this Discourse to you, who am

Gentlemen,

Your most humble
Servant,

Tho. Pittis.

Page 1. line 18. for one, read *own*. p. 12. l. 28. for *al-*
together, r. *all together*. p. 34. l. ult. for *of*, r. for. p. 36.
l. 20. place a comma at here. p. 52. l. 19. for *might*, r. *mind*.
p. 65. l. 6. r. *who sustains*, &c. p. 71. place the comma at
Religion, or it alters the sense. p. 114. l. 8. for *matter*, r. *man-*
ner. p. 115. l. 10. for *form*, r. *from*. p. 119. place things, l. 20.
after *those*, l. 19. p. 157. l. 22. r. *And when*, &c. l. ult. for
Disciple, r. *Disciples*. p. 183. for *their*, r. *her*. p. 211. for
Sess. 22. r. *Sess. 6*. p. 243. l. 10. 11. r. *At the close of several*
of his Controversies. p. 243. at *Essence* blot out comma. p. 252.
l. 21. for *nature*, r. *natures*. p. 253. l. 12. for *Omnipotent*, r.
glorious. p. 280. l. 16. blot out *nor*. p. 285. l. 15 for *repeated*,
r. *revealed*. p. 315. l. 15. for *nough*, r. *enough*. p. 356. l. 12.
for *io*, r. *to*. p. 358. l. 22. for *Spirits*, r. *Spirits*.

CHAP.

*The Preface, Introduction,
and Method of this Dis-
course.*

THE nature and composition of mankind, like that Voice which was heard in the Temple at *Jerusalem*, being a warning to its Officers, and a Prognostick of its ruine, cries aloud that we must depart hence; and since our abode in this World is a state of Pilgrimage, and our life here is in order to another; since we are a sufficient demonstration to our selves, that we were not so wonderfully made, to have our beings expire with our breath, but the frame and actions of the reasonable soul loudly proclaim its one immortality, and that death proves a change only, not annihilation; 'Tis rational for men to employ their
B thoughts

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thoughts how to be secured of an happy state when they shall be remov'd from their station here, to abandon this World, which endures but for a moment, and to make provision for a future, which shall last as long as Eternity can measure it. Now since there is nothing more likely to interest us in the happiness of the Regions above, than obedience to him who has them in his disposal; it is suitable to the reason and inference of men, to put themselves into his service, and be guided by the declarations of his will, since he has exhibited his Laws to the World: This puts us upon the exercise of virtue, and brings us under the conduct of his government. And because miserably dangerous is a miscarriage in this affair, admitting no reverse after death, nor can the thread of our lives be new spun when our common fate has snapp'd it asunder; our fear of error cautions us to be wary, that we may chuse well, and neither incline to the temptations of the flesh, nor be led aside by the allurements of the World, or the secret insinuations of evil Spirits, which like roaring Lions, *walk up and down, seeking whom they may devour*;

your ; from hence we see the necessity of diligence, as well to understand the Laws of our Maker, as to avoid their violation, which though sometimes it grows peccant by being over-curious, when the passion of fear conquers reason, and inclines men to superstition: yet more mistakes are frequently committed when we relax our diligence, from misapprehensions of the revelation of Gods will, and on a sudden grow confident and presume; inferring from our uncertain notions of Gods decrees, that duty and devotion are not absolutely necessary for the obtainment of the end of our hope, the salvation of our souls, since Gods decrees are unalterable, and the predestinate shall be saved let them do what they will, and the reprobates shall be damned let them do what they can. I shall not now endeavour to shew how inconsistent such positions are with the nature of God, the liberty of men, or the good government of the community: But this will appear most reasonable, that the Being of a God once granted, and that he contains all possible perfection; his worship and adoration will be a natural inference, and if he be our Maker

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and Benefactor, there is reason that we should petition and give him thanks : For not to be grateful is inhumane, and not to begg his favour on whom we depend, is foolish and irrational ; nay, worse than so ; for the Beasts themselves will condemn this, whose actions are to us discourse, and their sence of obligation arguments to convince us. The devouring Lion is obsequious to his keeper, the dull Ox knoweth his owner, and the sluggish Ass, that untractable creature, his Masters crib. It would be strange then, if reasonable men should not both know their obligations, and consider their duty : Goodness is usually so attractive to the will, especially that which is diffusive in courtesies, that from bad natures, it frequently commands both acknowledgement and returns : Where this therefore has shone bright, warming a Chaos into an orderly Creation, and brought us forth to be subordinate Governours over the works of Gods hands. 'Tis no wonder that it enlightens us to a sence of duty, and heats our zeal to worship and adore ; since we cannot chuse but pay our esteem (unless injustice checks ingenuity) to men amongst

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mongst our selves suitable to the excellencies inherent in them. Thus far, I suppose, mankind are agreed; and I may modestly challenge the universal vogue to vouch the assertion.

But now the thoughts of men will differ, and temperament or interest will sway their minds with reference to the modes of address; For the discourses of men being oftentimes as different as their complexions, and the sentiments and dispositions of the mind being very servile in attending upon the temperament of the body, (besides the power of custom and education) it is very difficult to disentangle the soul from those fetters in which prejudice has chained it, that it may be free in its inferences and conclusions. Hence is it that though we all agree upon the Being of a God, and that adoration and worship are due to him; Yet the acts compounding, and the ceremonies attending it, have raised so many Schisms and Contentions among men, that they seem to agree in nothing but resolutions always to differ. That we may say therefore to these winds, be still, and rebuke the storms which disturb the world, that some serenity

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may at last appear when the clouds are scattered ; I have taken the subject of Prayer to discourse on, it being a duty that ought to attend the course of our lives, to which our own necessities prompt us, our dependance upon God reasonably requires, and his command renders it indispensable. But yet because the variety of mens apprehensions and interests , which controvert every thing, have perplexed this, I would willingly be as instrumental as I can in settling your minds in a point of such universal concernment, (especially at this separated time of Lent, in which our publick devotions are more frequent, and with a greater solemnity enjoyned and practis'd, accompanied with fasting and Alms-giving, those mighty resignations of our selves, and estates, as sacrifices well pleasing unto God.) And therefore I shall endeavour (1.) to explain this duty, (2.) draw some inferences from the discourse.

In the explication I shall shew you these seven things.

First, What it is to Pray.

Secondly, What may be the import of some Precepts, and Phrases in Sacred Writ,

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Writ, which seem to set forth this duty of Prayer, as if it were to be continued without interruption.

Thirdly, What is the object of our Prayers, or to whom we ought to make this religious address.

Fourthly, In what manner we ought to pray. And this (1.) in relation to the intentions of our minds; (2.) with reference to the gesture of our bodies; (3.) in relation to words and expressions.

Fifthly, For what we may lawfully, and ought to pray; and this particular will involve persons and things.

Sixthly, Whether this duty of Prayer is enjoined so, that it is expected from all men, or only such as are good and vertuous.

And, Lastly, I shall consider whether it be so necessary or no; since God already knows our wants, and we cannot break the links that chain causes to effects, nor alter the Almighty's decrees or providence by any of our wishes or Prayers.

From the stating and resolution of which particulars, I shall at last infer three things:

First, That the service or prayers

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of

of our own Church are so framed and performed, that God does accept them, and are a proper method of addressing to him.

Secondly, That the Church of *Rome* is most irrational, and abominably peccant in hers.

Lastly, That such as live among our selves, and yet separate from us under the pretence of greater Reformation, and a more Pure and Evangelical worship, do not perform their services to God in such manner as is suitable to his Attributes, mans dependence, and the infinite distance 'twixt their Creator and themselves.

C H A P. I.

HAVING thus exhibited my designed method, I address myself to the first particular, to shew what it is to pray: And because many may conjecture, that my labour may be excus'd in this, since common practice will justly supersede this scruple, I shall be very brief in the resolution. Prayer then is no more than the offering up our desires unto God; In which the Soul has the honour, and advantage too, of breathing forth its wishes to our Maker, lodging them in the bosom, and heart of our Intercessor, and, through him, petitioning relief to supply all its necessities and wants. Now although this, when compleat, is joyned with confession and thanksgiving, yet, I shall not exceed the bounds of prayer, those being duties distinct from this, and each requires a different explication. Various men conceive divers definitions

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tions of prayer, but yet they are distinguished by words and phrases more than sense. One tells us 'tis a discourse, or a converse, with God ; Another, an ascending of the Soul to him ; and men exemplifie this duty by a multitude of Metaphors, that rather obscure than explain the thing : Nay, some set up *Jacobs* Ladder, in this case, for Angels to make their descent from Heaven, that they may obtain, again, a sensible and direct passage upwards, mount into the Regions above, carrying mens Petitions under their wings, and then convey the blessings of God down to them. This may indeed be allowed for Rhetorick ; but it neither explains or argues the thing. We may better guess at our Prayer unto God, by reflecting on our petitions to men, in which we always signifie our desires which we earnestly wish for, and humbly beg the grant of. And this I think to be the common notion we have of Prayer, which no man, that at all considers, can refuse to give his assent to.

Now this is made, when directed unto God, either in the inflamed, and ardent, desires of our minds
when,

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II

when, devoutly fixing our intentions upon him, we secretly wish what we do not express with our tongues: And we may easily suppose this method available, when the actions of our Souls are performed to him who as well understands the affections of our minds as the language of our mouths, and discerns our hearts, as well as hears our words. But our Prayers to God are also express'd by those instruments of speech, which he has framed as well for his service as our own: When we put the wishes and desires of our souls into suitable and expressive language, rehearsing this with the due and humble intention of our minds, and affection correspondent to our petitions.

And this is of two sorts, either private, or publick. (1.) Private, and ~~this~~ either of Husband and Wife, who being in a sense but one flesh, have some necessities betwixt themselves; but, yet, being distinct from others, require different and more secret petitions. (2.) There is a private praying most properly so, which every man does (or ought to) perform singly by himself; when first
exa-

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examining his state and condition, he devoutly begs what he wants, either in relation to himself alone, or as a member of some particular society, or else as he is within a larger community, the whole race of mankind. And of this sort of Prayer, it is that our Saviour speaks in that never to be parallel'd Sermon on the Mount: *But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy Closet, and shut the door, and pray unto thy Father which is in secret, and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly.* (Matth. 6. 6.) A sufficient caveat to the Pharisee and the Hypocrite, and a distinction betwixt these and the disciples of our Lord. But (2.) there is publick Prayer, as well as private; And that either in, and with, our families, which are, indeed, smaller congregations, when the Master exercises the office of the Priest, and, in his absence, has thus much of his authority to intercede on earth in the behalf of his family, and to become the mouth and Orator for the rest, that altogether by a conjunction of affections, and unity in words, may petition those things necessary

cessary for them in common with others of humane nature, and in those relations they bear to the family, and to each other. But (2.) Prayer that is more publick, is such as is made in the Church, or other places of Christian Assemblies, consigned to these publick offices, and by a solemn dedication set apart to Sacred and Divine uses; And this I shall have a more special regard to, in what I shall recommend to your consideration in this discourse; though men may also apply the particulars to their private devotions, as frequently as they shall find them rationally suited, and in this I would not seem to lay any yoke on the necks of disciples, which they, in reason, may refuse to bear.

Now publick Prayers, in more solemn conventions, and among greater numbers assembled together, have so apparently been offered from the beginning of the Church, both under the Old and New-Testament, that the pretension to a proof, could not but be deemed vain and foolish; this being the result of reason, and assembling together for common worship
being

being a duty imprinted on the souls of men, to the performance of which the light of nature has been their conduct. And if it required any arguments at all from reason, we might presently understand that by this Gods honour is exalted, when we jointly give a publick testimony of our piety and religion, that by this we propagate these things in the world, and by our examples provoke and stir up others to joyn in the same duty with our selves. That common requests, (such as in publick we are supposed to make, to which every individual may say Amen) require a joynt and common consent; and when our Prayers are thus connected, with the unity of our minds and spirits, they gain great degrees of power; like a twisted Cord, they become more strong and prevalent with God; they offer a Sacred violence to Heaven, and, (because God is pleased with such a Sacrifice) draw down favours from the Father of mercies.

Moreover, such Prayers are apt to be offered up with greater reverence and devotion, when service is performed in a Sacred place, in which God
is

is more especially present (at least by his dispersed train of Angels) where the objects of sense cast a secret awe upon our minds, and the mode and circumstances of such publick and Divine worship, attended with proper Ceremonies and Solemnity, are apt to move us to humility and adoration, to excite within us the affections of our minds, to fix our intentions that they may be united to their object, make our passions such as are Divine, and recal those swimming and tossing thoughts, which at any time are apt to wander. And finally, when our most solemn Prayers shall be offer'd by an ordained, or consecrated, person Sacred, or (which is all one) separated from the world to this employment, and dedicated unto God by resignation and solemnity, by his own devotion, and our Saviours institution, that he may become a secondary intercessor betwixt the people and their Creator, he weeping betwixt the Porch and the Altar, and crying out to Heaven for pardon and deliverance in that Sacred language, *Spare us, Good Lord, Spare thy People.* It cannot be but such a service must
found

found as pleasantly in the ears of God, as it is acceptable and rapturous to good men. And when we are thus gather'd together exercising the most exalted strains of our minds, when they are screwed beyond ordinary proportions, Christ himself is in the midst of us; he joyns in our Intercessions and Prayers, the holy Angels spread their wings over us to adorn the solemnity, and God himself beholds us from above, looks through the Clouds with smiles upon us, smells a sweetness from the incense of our Prayers, and that he may look farther, dissipates all intercepting clouds. And this shall suffice to shew what Prayer is.

C H A P. II.

I Et us now, in the second place, consider what may be the import of some phrases and precepts in Sacred Writ which seem to set forth this duty of prayer, as if it were to be continued without interruption. The *Euchites* of old were apt to conclude such precepts and phrases as *Pray without ceasing, Continuing instant in Prayer,* and the like, to be obligatory in the full latitude of their expressions: as if men were to do nothing else but pray: yet other duties that are required of us both as Christians, and men too, abundantly refute such unreasonable interpretations. Besides, the allotments of all moral or pious actions ought to be proportionate to their ends, as the quantity of a dose of Physick is increased or diminished according to the distemper of the Patient, varied so to temperaments and seasons, as may best expel the venom of the disease, resist its violence, and recover health to him that

C wants

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wants it. Now a great design and end of prayer, being to raise fervor and devotion in our souls, it ought no longer to continue, than we are able to keep up the intention of our thoughts, the elevation of our minds and the due order and fallies of our affections. Hence is it, that we are informed by *S. Austin*, that the Christians in *Egypt* had frequent prayers, being brief ejaculations, and short Collects, that a tedious continuation might not weary their affections, but their minds might be intended suitable to the seriousness and gravity of the duty, and they might not prove either flat or stupid; lest the prayer it self should, in the progress, be nothing else but an effusion of words without attention or manifestation of affection. From whence also, our own Church has ordered her Publick Service, so as to consist of various and distinct parts suitable to the variety and diversity of our affections, that all may be successively employed, and none, at once, too long burdened: and therefore, our prayers are usually brief, giving intervalls and respite both to Priest and people, that their souls and affections may recover strength,
and

and retrieve their vigour by these smaller interruptions, and not suffer too great a weakness to steal insensibly upon them, by being alwayes bent to their utmost power. Therefore the precepts and phrases in holy Scripture that seem to import continuance in prayer, cannot be designed in the utmost latitude, which the sound of words may usually imply, but they must admit of limitation and restraint.

So that, to be short in this; *We continue in prayer, and pray without ceasing,* and the like (1.) When we have such prepared and ardent love to our Maker, our selves, and the fellow creatures of our own species, that the exciting causes of prayer and devotion are alwayes present, when the opportunities of this duty offer themselves. (2.) When we keep our selves in a perpetual readiness and aptitude for devotion when ever we have time and occasion, and the reasons for prayer return upon us. For as we ought alwayes to be prepared for death, because we know not how suddenly it may assault us; so we must endeavour to preserve such a settled temper in our own minds, that

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our intentions and affections may be ready to exert themselves in prayer upon any emergent or periodical occasion. (3.) When we perform the solemn duties of our devotion with the highest strains and fervours of our souls, continuing instant in prayer; when a longer protraction, or a seeming denial of an answer to our petitions does not discourage us to a relaxation, or the omission of our duty; but our diligence is renewed, our supplications doubled, and we add force and vigour to our prayers. This we are taught by that excellent Parable of the unjust Judge and importunate Widow, to the end (says the Text) *that men ought alwayes to pray, and not, to faint,* (Luke 18. 1.) Lastly, We may be then said to *pray without ceasing, to continue instant in prayer, to pray alwayes,* and the like, when we make the returns of our prayers frequent, and our supplications to God are willingly presented as often as times and opportunities are afforded us. At least it cannot come short of this, to make prayer our every dayes work. So that *nullâ die intermittantur certa tempora orandi*; we must not omit our stated times and hours

hours of devotion. And this will appear no less rational than prayer it self is pleasant and advantageous, when we shall consider, that we are dependent beings, and daily need the influences of Heaven to supply our necessities, and relieve our wants, and the kind Providence of Almighty God to support and nourish us. The continual casualties we are liable to, and the frequent dangers we are involved in by our own inadvertency, the snares of the world, the nets which unfaithful or malicious men spread for us, and the violence or insinuations of the Devil may call upon us for our daily prayers to him, who has promised to hear, and to deliver us. The daily presenting our prayers to God, is recommended to us by the daily Sacrifice and Offerings of the Law (*Numb. 28.* at the beginning.) These were Types of the Christian Service, which being performed Morning and Evening, becomes our solemn and reasonable devotion. Evening, Morning, and at Noon too, *will I pray and cry aloud*, sayes David, (*Psal. 55. 17.*) And *Daniel* thought prayer so indispensable a duty, that rather than omit it, he would endure

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the utmost severity, even to be cast into the Lions Den, (*Dan. 6. 10.*) This is enjoined in that prayer of our Lord which is to be both our form and our pattern, where we are taught to petition our daily bread, day by day: Nor does he only, by this, prohibit too inordinate a care for the things of this life, but enjoins us to testify our continual dependence upon our Maker, commanding frequent and daily petitions. And it is but reasonable, that we being delivered out of the hands of our enemies, should now serve God without fear, in holiness and righteousness all the days of our lives, (*Luke 1. 75.*) of which comprehensive duties, our prayers and devotions are necessary parts. And thus much in relation to the second particular mentioned in the Scheme of this discourse, to consider what may be the import of some phrases and precepts in the Scriptures which seem to set forth this duty of prayer, as if it were to be continued without intermission.

CHAP.

C H A P. III.

I Now proceed to the Third Head of this discourse of prayer, to make some enquiry concerning the object of it, and determine to whom we ought to address our selves in our religious devotions of this kind. And this must, without all peradventure, be only to the Supream God, the Creator and Governour of all beings inferiour to himself. We honour (as we ought) the Graces and Vertues of Saints departed, and the memory of the just is sacred to us; we admire also the excellencies of Angels, and praise God for the various and useful workmanship of his hands. Nay, we treat all things in our thoughts and discourses with that esteem which is suitable to their beings, or that order which they possess in the Universe; and we advance our contemplations when we think of Angels, suitable to the purity, and limited perfection of their beings, and their honourable employment of being the messen-

gers of the Lord of Hosts, who has Legions of them at his disposal. But there being, from him, neither command nor argument for invocation of them, nor any reason to expect their aid otherwise than they are ordered by the King of Heaven, we therefore make no addresses to them by solemn prayers, and separate devotions, because we are afraid to pay such services to a Creature, which must necessarily detract from the honour due to our Creator only. 'Tis true, indeed, we pay our ceremonies and demonstrations of respect to men, on earth, suitable to their natural or acquired dignity: And common Justice commands our internal value and esteem in some proportion to their excellency and virtues; But we do not presently fall down and worship every one that is richly adorned, nor petition those things that are not in his power to bestow. Nay, to proceed as far as we can without Idolatry or sin, we should not refuse to pay such civil testimonies of our respects, as the Patriarchs of old gave either to glorified Saints, or innocent and ever blessed Angels, should they, at any time, assume shapes, and mix
them-

themselves among dust and ashes to negotiate any affairs with us, and descend to the similitude of a humane conversation: Provided that we have sufficient time to examine the truth of the Apparition, that we may be assured we are not imposed on either by the Devil in the likeness of an Angel of Light, nor the slights and tricks of cunning Priests, or any false appearance to our own imaginations, or either subtle, or roguish inventions of other men; but might have good assurance that we are not deluded. Yet it will not, at all, from hence follow, that acts of Religion, appropriated to God, may be performed to those to whom we acknowledge a civil respect to be just and due, this being only an estimation, expressed by outward signs and gestures, suitable to their beings and degrees of perfection. And however men of contrary persuasions, (especially the *Romanists*,) who pretend to proportion their practice suitable to the conceptions of their minds, may save themselves in this particular from the imputation of Idolatry, by stating curiously, the termination of their worship; yet they cannot free themselves,

selves, in this particular, from error and presumption, from a voluntary humility, and will-worship, when they pay such acts of Religion to creatures in glory, as approach so near to the worship of the Deity, that betwixt it and Idolatry, there hangs no more than a small cobweb, a very nice and thin distinction. But we dare not constitute Mediators of our own, when God has appointed one for us; One even as God is so, and consequently must exclude others. *There is one God* (sayes the Apostle) *and one Mediator betwixt God and man, the man Christ Jesus,* (1 Tim. 2. 5.) Nor will any distinction here serve, because our Mediator intercedes in vertue of his Sacrifice; and therefore, if there are more Mediators for us in Heaven, more must have shed their blood on earth. We desire, indeed, the prayers of men living among our selves; as *S. Paul* did when he beseech'd the Brethren to pray for himself; but we do not invoke them by acts of Religion, when we beg this charitable office from them: Nor do we intrench upon the great Intercessor in the highest Heaven, when we desire these intercessions upon the earth,
but

but only that the incense of other mens prayers, ascending through the Skies to the supream Palace of the Most High, may be presented unto God by the hands of our High Priest resident there, not only as a token of his triumphs and victories whilst he was upon the earth, or reassuming the right belonging to his God head, but on purpose, also, to make intercession for us.

If the Saints above could receive notices of our desires, and we knew how to signifie our wants to them, and present our grievances to their apprehensions, as we do to those who converse with us here : It is then probable, that many men would think it reasonable to make that their desire to them (though not by a religious act of prayer) which now they conjecture to be vain and fruitless : Because their own necessities (themselves being not yet compleatly glorified) might incline them to pray for men whom they left in this lower world, in relation to those things especially, that may tend to the fulfilling the number of Gods elect, and the hastning that Kingdom which shall be compleated hereafter, that all
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partaking in a glorious translation, or resurrection, they themselves may have the compleatment of that happiness which they now desire, but shall not fully possess, till the re-union of their bodies to their souls, which death yet keeps in a state of separation. Besides, this seems reasonable to be allowed; that the charity of souls now in Heaven cannot but be advanced and extended, far beyond the possibilities of this world: and therefore as it is very probable (unless we suppose their understandings and memories to dye with them) that they may be now so mindful of the necessities of men in general, that are left behind them in a miserable world, as to exert some acts in common, that may be proportionable to prayer for us: So could men, who are yet resident on the earth, know any method of signifying their particular desires to them, they might perhaps insert them in their wishes, and make such petitions their own. For if the rich Glutton in Hell was so sensible of his Brethrens danger, as to beg *Abraham* to send *Lazarus* to them, to assure them of the truth of a future torment, and to warn them to flee from
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the wrath to come; much more may we suppose the Saints in Heaven to carry away with them such notices and remembrance of the hazards and miseries of mankind in this world, that their enlarged charity may cause them, in general, to petition for their relief. But it does not, at all, from hence follow, that the Saints above can be sensible of all the particular accidents in this world which now happen since their departure. Nor does *Bellarmino's* making a Looking glass of his Maker at all help the contrary assertion, the viewing all things in God, *tanquam in speculo*, being as unintelligible by the reasons of men, as it is invisible to those who have no eyes to see it. 'Tis true, indeed, God may reveal to them the necessities of the world, and somethings which happen here, and *there is joy in Heaven for the conversion of a sinner*, (Luke 15. 10.) But that he does these things to Saints departed, we have no evidence; but the contrary is asserted in Sacred Writ. *For Abraham is ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledges us not*, (Isa. 63. 16.) And therefore *nesciunt mortui, etiam sancti, quid agunt vivi, etiam eorum filii*, (sayes S. Austin in *cura*

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curâ pro mortuis) : The Saints that are dead know not what the living do; nay, their very Children. In vain, therefore, would it be (though it were not mixed with any impiety, nor done in the way of prayer, and religious invocation) to desire any help from those who are not acquainted with our wants, nor any where appointed to convey blessings to us: Nay, if we were assured that they knew all our particular needs, as they have been acquainted with the infirmities of mankind, it could not be an argument to incline us to implore their aid and assistance, especially with such solemnity and devotion as is used in prayer: Because God from whom we receive directions for the substantials, and essential methods of our devotion, has no where commanded such circular prayers, that by the mediation of these, we should at any time address our selves to him. We are directed only by our Blessed Saviour to ask in his name; and to this we have the promise of an answer. *Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name* (sayes Christ) *he will give it you,* (John 16. 23.) And the Author to the Hebrews plainly exhorts, that since

since we have so great an High Priest, who is passed into the Heavens, *Let us come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need,* (Heb. 4. 6.) Here is no need of similitudes from Courts below, to teach us methods of address to him by whom Princes reign; Or if there were, what man that may himself present his petition to an earthly King, and discourse his affair freely with him, would use the mediation of a Master of Requests, especially if the King himself had committed the care of this business to his Son? We need not argue our selves to reverence and humility in our addresses to God, when we consider the distance and disproportion betwixt him and our selves, *that he is our Creator, and we the workmanship of his hands,* and therefore he has a right of being petitioned in that method himself has appointed; especially when he has been so favourable to us, who are sinful dust and ashes, that, without his protection, should be scattered by the wind, and blown away with every storm. And we must easily, if we are not too obstinate, be excited to exercise due affection with
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devout intention, and an awful, though brisk, fervency in our minds, if we reflect upon the dangers we are liable to, when we are not guarded by the Divine Providence, the wants and necessities of our own frail and weak beings, the continual dependence we have upon our Maker, who is the *great preserver of men*, and the love and favour which he demonstrates to those who reverently adore him, and call upon his name. I shall therefore draw the conclusion of this particular, by giving some reasons of the former assertion, That God alone is to be the object of our prayers, when we pretend to make religious addresses.

C H A P. IV.

THe reasons why God alone is to be the object of our prayers, are, (1.) Because that supream veneration, which we demonstrate by our solemn and most intense devotion in prayer, can be due to none, but to him who has all possible perfection, which none except the Supream God is endowed with. For if there were any perfection or excellency seated in another independent of himself, God would then be finite in his excellencies, something being supposed of perfection to be inherent in another, which is not in himself. But all creatures are dependent and limited, and could not be creatures, if they were not so ; therefore whatever rayes of glory or perfection shine upon and adorn other beings to make them beautiful in their own kind, are emitted from that glorious Sun which produces all things, and rules them by his power. Hence came that solemn acknowledgement
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of pious *David* before all the Congregation; *Thine, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty; for all that is in the heaven and the earth is thine; Thine is the Kingdom, O Lord, and thou art exalted as head above all: Both riches and honour come of thee, and thou reignest over all; and in thine hand is power and might, and in thine hand is to make great, and to give strength unto all; (1 Chron. chap. 29.v.11, 12.).* This also is most devoutly acknowledged in that great and solemn Fast of the Jews, (*Nehem. 9.6.*) *Thou, even thou, art Lord alone; thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens with all their host, the earth and all things therein, the seas and all that is therein, and thou preservest them all; and the host of heaven worshippeth thee. And therefore who shall not fear thee, O Lord! (say the seven Angels) and glorifie thy name? For thou only art holy, because all Nations shall come and worship before thee, for thy judgements are made manifest, (Rev. 15.4.)* The creation of all things gives God the sovereignty over all, and from his dominion is infer'd his providence, and his providence is an argument of our prayer
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and invocation, as an honour due to him from mankind, by reason of his own self-existent sufficiency, and our dependence upon his eternal Being. Because *amongst the Gods there was none like him, nor are any works like unto his*; Therefore (says David) *all Nations, whom thou hast made, shall come and worship before thee, O Lord, and shall glorifie thy name,* (Psal. 86. 8, 9.) So that the foundation of mens worship being excellency and greatness, and this being originally and independently in God, and in him alone; it follows, that all honour and glory are due to him, and none to others but for his sake, and by his command; and particularly, that our divine acknowledgements, such as are pretended in our prayers, he alone is capable of, and consequently, must be the object of our devotions.

Secondly, I argue the truth of this, from the first notions men have of religion, this having its prime relation unto God; by this we enter into covenant with him, and oblige our selves to be subject to him according to duty incumbent upon mankind by the Laws of their creation: For whether the name be derived *à relegendò* or *religando*, ac-

cording to the opinion of *Isidore*, or *S. Austin*, it must still be referr'd to God. Or if we had rather accept of *Tully's* definition, that it is *virtus qua superiori cuidam naturæ cultum ceremoniamque affert* : a vertue that brings worship and ceremony to a certain superiour nature ; this superiour nature determined by *cuidam*, is but one, even the supream and most excellent being. Now prayer being an eminent act of religion, it follows, that it is due to God only. I know religion, and prayer too, are terms of an equivocal signifi-
 cancy, and therefore capable of having many distinctions framed concerning them, to evade arguments, rather than answer them, when they endeavour to confine Gods worship to himself: when I treat, therefore, of religion here though, in a larger sense , it includes other things, I intend, only, those proper acts of duty and worship due to the supream Being, flowing from the nature and reason of mankind, which our own obligations prompt us to ; or imposed on us by God himself, which he has declared in Sacred Writ in general, or particular, injunctions, and by the inferences that rea-
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son may most directly and justly draw from it: And when I speak of prayer, I suppose it to be a branch of this religion, and a solemn part of divine worship. Now whatever else, besides God himself, shares in this, detracts from the honour due to him, and joyns the Altar of God with Idols. For whatsoever else we admit to partake in such religious worship, so as to become an object of our prayers, becomes a copartner with God himself; and the Universe consisting of God and creatures, what ever else we religiously invoke must be some of the work of the Almighty's hands; and then we give his glory to another, and his praise to them that are not gods; consequently we dispose the Creator's honour to his own creatures, and detract from the Architect to exalt his building; An affront that he will never suffer, who is a Jealous God, though it be given to the most worthy creature; because he has declared against, and forbidden it; but never signified the lawfulness of it, either by his publick command or permission; unless, because he has suffered Idols till the worshippers sins were ripe for vengeance,

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geance, men will from thence conclude that he approved it. And dare bold men make Idols to themselves which God so constantly forbids and hates? Or take others into partnership with him, when he has declared himself to be the great Jehovah, such a Lord as besides him there is none other?

But further, that God is only to be worshipped in religion, seems a proposition so firmly rivetted in the natures of men, that though many have mistaken their God, yet few would pray to that which they thought to be none at all; and therefore when they supplicated such Images, which they could not chuse but know were nothing but the carved work of mens hands, yet they therefore prayed to them because they thought them to be inspired with divinity, and that the Deity it self was confined to some residence in them, and so they pretended to address themselves to their God within the Image, and not unto the Block or Stone it self, but through the case they pass'd to the divinity; such little shifts do others also, who should understand Religion better, use to shelter themselves under the shadow of their Idols, being
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so well instructed by the Pagans who were more ancient than themselves. But to give the honour of God to a creature must needs appear unreasonable in Religion, since no Subject can with Loyalty pay the homage due only to the King, to any, though the most noble Peer, when it is reserved to the King alone; and therefore God having reserved divine worship, such as solemn prayer of which I treat, only to himself, no man can lawfully give it to another, and think it to consist with true Religion: But of this more in my last argument for prayer to be made to God only.

Thirdly, God alone is to be the object of our prayers, because none but he can answer the end and design of our petitions. Who amongst all the glories of the Creation, is so capable of understanding, or bestowing the things we petition for, or endowed with such qualifications as may render him fit for rational creatures, in all their exigencies to become devout petitioners unto? Can any give us the pardon of our sins by his own authority, or dispence with the breach of Gods Law but himself? When he con-

veys this by the ministration of others, they are only his substituted Delegates, and he no more gives his glory to them than he will part with his praise to a graven Image. Who can bestow grace or glory but he who has an infinite fulness of both, whose treasure is inexhaustible; whose spirit, from whence our graces are conveyed, is compared in Scripture, not only to the Wind which bloweth where it listeth, but also to a fountain of living waters always springing up unto eternal life? And who can bestow the glory above but he whose presence makes it so, whose right hand holds Stars, and has all Crowns at his own disposal? Who can rid us of many troubles, especially those that disquiet our minds, but he that can rebuke tempests and storms, dispel the clouds that hang over them, and deliver the righteous out of all their afflictions? There are three things necessarily supposed in a person qualified for rational creatures to make their religious addresses to. (1.) That he be capable of hearing and understanding our petitions. (2.) That he is able to bestow what we supplicate him for. And (3.) That

(3.) That he is willing to give what we beg, if it may be consistent with his prudence and our welfare. And whom can we find thus qualified but the great God whom we adore and worship? Who is omniscient and can understand our petitions and knows our wants; Omnipotent, and therefore can answer our desires; and of infinite goodness, and so willing to relieve us in such things as may consist with his providence and our advantage. If these things are wanting in the object of our prayers, all our addresses will be rendred fruitless. If he cannot hear, or is not able to relieve, or is very hard and not willing to be kind to us; To what purpose then do we utter our wants, and earnestly beg relief from him? If beggars knew such men among our selves, they would spare their breath whilst these passed by: so that I may now propose *Eliphaz's* question in the Book of *Job*, with better reason than that in which the Papists urge it, *Call now if there be any that will answer thee, and to which of the Saints wilt thou turn?* (*Job* 5.1.) Angels themselves would be charg'd with folly, should they attempt an answer

to our religious petitions without a declar'd permission, or command from their Maker; how much more those who have dwelt in houses of clay, whose foundation was in the dust, who have been crush'd before the moth, and all their excellency and glory which we admired here, went away, when they were destroyed from Morning to Evening? The dead (for ought I could ever yet understand) can no more hear us than *Baal* could his Prophets when they cry'd to him from morning till noon; they can no more answer to our call than they can praise God with the instruments of speech when their deserted carcases lay rotting in a Grave. But God himself has given testimonies of his audience, and several waies convers'd with men: He hears our prayers, and understands our thoughts afar off. He has three attributes that render him fit for our religious addresses. For (1.) he is omnipotent, and therefore there is nothing we can petition from him, but he is able to grant, and to bestow it; For power being only an ability so to exercise causality as to influence causes to produce their effects, he

he that is the Author of causes, being the origin of all things, must needs be the fountain of all power, and he that is so must be omnipotent, and therefore is able to fullfil our desires.

(2.) He is omniscient too, and therefore certainly knows our wants: For knowledge consists in an exertion of power, as all actions proceed from an ability, and are the exercise of some power; he therefore that is omnipotent must needs be omniscient also. For were there any thing that he could not know, there would be something out of the compass of his power, and the attribute of his omnipotence would be weakned and destroyed: nor does the not knowing or effecting impossibilities or contradictions at all invalidate these glorious attributes; because those are so far from being things in act, that they are not capable of being such in power, nor can any futurity give them being: And what is, and must remain nothing, can neither be the proper object of strength, or knowledge. (3.) God has infinite goodness essential to his being; the creation of the world proceeded from it, and that he now supports it, is owing to his
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grace and favour; and his goodness, besides particular examples, is visible to us in his daily providence: without the two former attributes he could neither have made, nor could he order and govern the world; and to make him a Being with infinite knowledge and Almighty power without any goodness to allay the exercise of it, supposes him to be nothing else but an omnipotent Devil; for what Beings are that have sufficient power, without any good nature to restrain it, they that are frequently oppress'd by others know by too woful and melancholy experience.

These glorious Attributes therefore of power, knowledge, and goodness, being thus rationally fixed in the God whom we adore, he becomes a fit object of our prayers, and one in whom we may confide and trust, since under the shadow of his wings there is safety; He has declared that he keeps mercy for thousands, and the marks of it are visible in our beings, living, and our allotments in this world; and especially it appears in his wonderful redemption of mankind, when he gave his Son to be a Ransome for us all, and

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received him into Heaven that he might fulfill his promises made on Earth, and make continual intercessions for us, in vertue of his bloody sacrifice upon the Cross. To distrust the goodness of such a God, would be both ungrateful and inhumane, to be the most surly and vilest Pensioners in the world, to provoke the utmost of his wrath and fury; and we must unman our selves before we can thus ungod the Deity.

Lastly, that I may urge a most concluding argument; God alone is to be the object of our prayers, because he has commanded us thus to worship him, and has prohibited the offering our religious devotions to any other: This is engravened upon the tables of the moral Law, which is of a standing and perpetual establishment; That we shall have no other Gods but himself: And that we shall not make to our selves any Idol to worship, nor the similitude of any thing religiously to fall down before it (*Exod. 20.*) and he backs the prohibition with an argument drawn from the Jealousy he has of being deprived of his honour; and a solemn declaration that he
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will severely punish the guilty. We find therefore that when *Aaron*, to appease the multitude, made a molten Calf, which the people supposed to be a representation of their Deliverer, and the God that brought them out of *Egypt*, rearing an Altar upon which they made their burnt, and peace offerings ; though they seemed to terminate their worship in God, transferring their oblations through this representation to him that was superiour to the offerings and the Idol ; making God the ultimate object of their devotions by proclaiming this to be a feast unto Jehovah ; yet we find that the fire kindled for this sacrifice, made the wrath of God to burn ; nor could *Moses's* intercession expiate the crime ; but he blotted their names out of the book of Life, there were immediately slain three thousand of them, and God continued to plague the people, scattering their carcases about the Wilderness, and in their progress visited this sin upon them. (*Exod. 33.*) Nay men are not only thus cautioned, by many precepts and examples in the Old Testament, that they approach not near the confines of Idolatry, to
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give Gods glory to another, or his praise to graven, or molten Images; (too numerous for me to reckon up here, and granted by all who have any knowledge of those Scriptures) But God has sufficiently forbidden it under the New, where he has appointed his worship more proportionate to his being, and the service of Christians to be agreeable to his nature, in spirit and in truth, neither with the corporal representation of the *Samaritans*, nor in their schism; nor yet according to the worship of the *Jews* by bloody sacrifices, or under types and shadows prefiguring any Messias to come; nor yet as the Gentiles, by any of their inferiour Dæmons. When Satan tempted our blessed Saviour with the same bait which others make a tender of to those whom they endeavour to proselyte, *All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me*; He presently repell'd him with disdain and scorn: *Get thee behind me Satan; For it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.* (Matth. 4. 10.) If God would have been worshipped by the mediation of any but the great Medi-

Mediator of the New Covenant, who is the Image of the invisible God, he would not have left mankind in the dark, but there would have appeared light in this as well as other things that seem not so considerable, to have guided them to the performance of that which he expected in his solemn worship from them. But no directions to this appear, nor can the Scriptures, at all, patronize it, unless corrupted by false glosses, and forced interpretations. Yet the contrary is as clear as the Sun, and all eyes that are not blind may behold it. Angels themselves, those glorious creatures which are apt to draw the utmost of our civil respects to them, refuse to share in the honour of their Maker, and prohibit the Testimonies of Divine worship. The Angel which appeared to converse with Saint *John*, when this beloved Disciple prostrated himself to worship him, suddenly replied, see thou do it not; and urges two arguments to inforce his prohibition, enough to deter all mankind from paying acts of Religion to a creature: (1.) sayes he, I am thy fellow servant, and of thy brethren, the off-

offspring of the universal Parent, therefore such honour is not due to me. (2.) God being the object of adoration, such homage is justly appropriated to himself, and therefore, sayes the Angel, worship God. (*Rev. 19. 10.*) Nay worshipping God by the mediation of Angels beguiles Christians of the reward and Crown which they strive for: *Col. 2. 18.* And much more must they miss their recompence, if they make their religious addressees to the Angels themselves, begging of them what is part of Gods prerogative to grant. Now as the invocation of these detracts so much from the glory of their Maker; so, much more, do we derogate from his honour if we make religious petitions unto Saints: For these are of an inferior classis, their natures being not capable of those embellishments that adorn Angels. Therefore when *Cornelius* fell down and worshipped Saint *Peter*, he snatched him up, and bad him stand upon his feet, and forbear such signals of reverence to him, which were usually paid in acts of devotion; For, sayes he, *I my self also am a man.* (*Acts 10. 26.*) Thus also did *Paul* and

Barnabas refuse the worship of the *Lycaonians*, rending their cloaths at their publick blasphemy and intended Idolatry; and stopp'd their Sacrifice with an argument that, methinks, should startle others; *We also are men of like passions with you.* (Acts 14. 15.) This is the last argument therefore, why God alone is to be the object of our prayers, because we are commanded to worship him in sacred Writ, and forbidden to offer our devotions to another. And this may suffice for answer to my third Enquiry, by shewing us to whom we ought to make our religious addresses.

C H A P. V.

I Proceed now to enquire into the mode of our address to the great God, whom, for his infinite excellencies, we adore and worship, upon supposition that he only is to be the object of our religious devotions, in which solemn prayer bears a great share: In this some of the controversies among us, raised by persons who are gone out from us, will be something (though not as much as I intend) regarded. And therefore I shall enquire into the manner in which we ought to pray; And (1.) with reference to the intentions of our minds. (2.) In relation to the gesture of our bodies. (3.) To shew something which may regard our words and expressions.

First, The manner of our addresses with reference to the intention of our minds ought to be such as may include great activity in our rational faculties, and exert our affections in some proportion to the value of our

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petitions, and the most glorious object whom we invoke. Particularly so, that the more considerable and worthy our prayers are, the more exalted and earnest must our desires be. The external representations of any mans devotion without the inward affection and fervency of his mind are acts of hypocrisie, not religion: 'Tis like the common dissimulations amongst our selves, when we fawn upon a man till we obtain an opportunity to devour him. *My Son* (sayes Wisdom) *give me thine heart.* (Prov. 23. 26.) And the first and great commandment of the Law, according to our Saviours interpretation, is, *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy might, and with all thy soul.* (Matth. 22. 37.) Hence are those declared blessed, by the Psalmist, *that seek God with their whole heart.* (Psal. 119. 2.) And by this rule was King David himself wont to manage his addresses. *With my whole heart have I sought thee,* (sayes he to God Psal. 119. 10.) *And I intreated thy favour with my whole heart.* (vers. 58.) And he urges it as an argument why God should hear him, *because he cryed*
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with his whole heart, (verf. 145.). His mind was intent on, and accompanied, his petitions, and his ferioufnefs in this fnatch'd away his Soul wholly to it felf, and the God to whom he made his addreffes: fo muft we, in our prayers to the fupream Being, diligently attend to what we defire, and being firft fatisfied concerning the matter and expreffions of our prayers, our moft earneft wifhes muft accompany the words in which we prefent our petitions unto God. Now this cannot poffibly be done unlefs (1.) we underftand the phrafes and words in which we utter the petitions of our minds: For how can we intend our fouls, and raife our affections fuitable to the weight and urgency of our prayers, when we do not underftand what is offered by our felves, or any other in our behalf? There muft, in prayer, be an elevation of our minds accompanying our petitions, and our fouls muft in a manner pafs into our devotions, that they may be totally imploied in this duty, for the time we are about it, without any diverting reflections: But this can never be when we have not previous appre-

hensions of the matter of our prayers, and a sufficient perception of the sense of our petitions, nay and, most commonly, the very expressions then used. For the soul being otherwise employed in the invention of method and sense, and straining also for words to express it, or in passing judgment upon the inventions of another who presumes to utter the wants of a congregation in a new dress, and every time with variation of phrases; All know that the soul of man can exert but one act at the same instant, nor consider any more than one thing at once; how then can it judge and apprehend at the same time, raise its affections proportionable to the petition, and keep it self fixed upon God in any tolerable measure? It cannot therefore, with equal paces, accompany a prayer which it does not understand before it comes to make use of it. And, truly, were this well and seriously considered, it would render prayers useless and insufficient that are either made in an unknown tongue, or in English phrases that are unpremeditated, unintelligible, or unknown before hand to those who are to join in the
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the oblation, so as to bind up their assent to the petitions, and to satisfy themselves that they pray with understanding. As to any objection that may be made from mens joyning in prayers which they never heard before, as in the case when a stranger comes to preach ; it may easily be answered that no man can assent to the whole with understanding, unless he be a person of extraordinary apprehensions, or he that prayes makes more than common pauses at the end of every period of a petition, that all may have time to apprehend, and judge, and put up an earnest wish with it. Otherwise, some periods subsequent must needs pass before the antecedent has been considered, unless it may be allowed to have such an implicit faith in a man, that whatever he says at such a time is Gospel ; and whither this will carry us may be easily known, since it is the direct road to *Rome* : For if we may implicitly believe particular men without examination, in cases that are in our own power ; much more, will they say, may we believe the Church. But Prayer indeed consists not in a voluble effusion of words and language,

but this must be attended with a suitable fervour, which cannot be without a due intention of mind, and this requires a previous acquaintance with what is uttered, that the understanding may command and regulate the affections. When the understanding is thus justly informed beforehand, we may be more zealous and earnest in raising our affections to a decent height, and so fix our intentions upon the object of our prayers, and the weightiness of the things we petition for, that our souls will suffer some kind of transport, and be swallowed up wholly in them. Have you not seen a person who delights in musick, so ravished with the strokes made upon his Viol, and transported with those pleasant Aires, that the intention of his mind, and all his faculties have been so fully imployed that he has disregarded all things else, as if his soul had suffered a transmigration, and had wholly pass'd into the instrument he played on? Thus should it be (as far as humane frailty will permit) with men devoutly earnest in prayer; we should come to it with such preparation, and seriousness of mind, that knowing before what we design to petiti-

petition Heaven for, we should be intent like men begging for their lives, and every prayer were the last we should make; that so, God, seeing our fervour and devotion, may be inclined to hear, and to have mercy. For when, at any time, our minds wander in our prayers, and do not accompany the words uttered; so much of the prayers are lost to us as are passed over whilst we permitted the diversion; and the only remedy by which we may interest our selves in what is gone, is, in my opinion, to recollect the petitions as well as we can, (which we may do where the usual forms of the Church are used) and utter an hearty Amen to them. (2.) We must, in the intending our minds in our solemn devotions, fix our souls on the object of our prayers, and as much as we can throughout the whole, carry along, whilst we utter our wants, some notions of that glorious Being to whom we make our religious addressees, especially at the first entrance upon them, that we may not pray to a wrong object, or to none at all. Now in this I fear many may fail, and in their prayers make an Idol in their
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fancies when yet they abhor one that is sensible, or material, represented to their bodily eyes: For we are apt to frame to our selves (especially men who are not used to abstraction) a representation of God by something which has been exposed to our senses, or at least by a confused joyning of many of these objects together: But this is worshipping by a false similitude, which we justly accuse and condemn others for. And yet the difference seems not to be so great, whether the similitude of our God in prayer be represented to our external senses, or in the Idea and Image of our minds, when we frame such an uncouth Picture there, and turn our eyes inward to behold it. For the fault seems not to be much alleviated when we refuse to frame a carved Image to represent him to whom we pray, if in the mean time we create one in our own imagination, and then prostrate our selves before it, and pray with the direction of our intentions to it. Were we capable indeed of framing an Idea of him; that is, conceiving an exact similitude of God: no doubt but it would become our duty,

as well as our priviledge to make this representation of him to our selves, and it might become an excellent mean to keep our souls and minds intent. But there are two reasons (among others) why this is impossible to be done: (1.) Because God is a Spirit; something that is void of all matter, not capable of parts, or such quantitative extension as bodies have, and consequently we cannot frame any positive and proportionate notion of him allrogether, as we can of those things which we have seen; but we know his being only by his Attributes, which we cannot consider all at once, as we can the figure and proportion of a man, together with the Being to which these Attributes belong. That God is, may easily be demonstrated; but what manner of Being he is to which these Attributes are fixed, will, I think, be difficult to be apprehended by men, to whom the bare essences of things, far inferior, are so latent and abstruse: So that they must be forced to acknowledge God to be incomprehensible: For we find that when we retire within our selves, and shut up our souls never so much from any communication with exterior

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or objects, though we can frame propositions and discourses concerning spirits; yet we can have no representations of them, or figures of proportion, as we can make of other things which have been the objects of our senses, though they are at present at a distance from us, or shut out from our view by the darkness of the night, or a closure of our eyes. And, to say truth, could a spirit be drawn by us under a similitude, it must put off its nature, and become material, whilst we draw an Image of it, & it must be subject to our external senses. Hence was it that our Saviour confuted the worship of the *Samaritans*, who (as Mr. *Mede* has evidenced) worshipped God under the similitude of a Dove, and plainly told the woman he convers'd with, that they worshipped they knew not what, because the object to whom they directed their intentions was confined to this resemblance whilst they were at their devotions. When all this while God was a spirit, and such as pretended to his service ought to address themselves to him under that notion, in spirit and in truth, and not by any corporal representation. And indeed it seems to be very unreasonable to draw

draw lineaments and proportions of God by our own fancies and imaginations when he has no such things in himself; nor (as Christ sayes) has any man seen the Father. (2.) 'Tis impossible for us to frame a positive Idea or any adequate representation of God in our minds, because he is an infinite Being, and our souls are but of finite capacities. And what is finite cannot frame or receive an Idea that is infinite: For what is so can no more be limited or circumscribed, than an infinite space can be measured, or drawn into the number of proportions; and this can never be, because whatever a thing is measured by, must either singly be commensurate to it, or else by the reduplication of a shorter measure we must at last sum up its parts and proportions into one intire dimension in breadth, depth, and length. But what infinite measure can we find out that shall stretch it self parallel to what is altogether infinite, since what is so has no ends? Or what number of measures can possibly reach it? If it could be run over, it had an end, and then how could it be called infinite? If it could
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be supposed that one infinite could be the measure of another, and no penetration yet admitted ; then one must be where the other is not, and then neither could be accounted infinite, because one bounds and limits the other : If a penetration through the whole should be supposed and granted, both infinities would be but one ; and consequently the thoughts of a measure must perish. So that for a finite Being to endeavour to comprehend an infinite essence, or to frame an Idea, or an adequate representation of him is more impossible than for a man to grasp the Globe of Earth in the hollow of his hand, to carry the greatest Mountain upon his shoulder, when he has torn it from the rest of the earth ; to drink up the Ocean at one draught, or any thing else that is more difficult ; there being some proportion betwixt things that are finite , but between a finite and an infinite none at all. When we can contain the Sea and Rivers in an empty eggshell , shoot the fixed Stars down from heaven, take a leap from the Earth to the Moon, make the least Vessel to hold all the contents of the greatest, or do any thing else
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that is more impossible, then may we attempt (though we shall not accomplish it) to frame a notion and representation of the Deity, that may be equal to his infinite being. But, in the mean time, let us beware of a notional Idol, whilst we endeavour to avoid a substantial one.

Yet since the nature and constitution of man is such, that we are apt, in our invocations of God, to frame similitudes and representations of that Being to whom we make our religious addresses. It may not be amiss if I here endeavour briefly to inform you what (as I conceive) ought to be the apprehensions and sentiments of mens minds, with reference to the great and supream God, to whom they pray ; that the intentions of their souls may be rationally, and also piously, directed in this important and necessary duty of their lives. To effect this, it must be remark'd that the God, whom we pretend to worship, contains within himself all manner of perfection; and consequently he must include all those things, which his own declarations have manifested to the World ; or the reason of men have, lawfully,
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and by good consequence, concluded to be most excellent and glorious in themselves. He must be endow'd, therefore, with all knowledge, power, goodness, impassibility, justice, truth, mercy, faithfulness, and the like, with self existency and eternity crowning and adding an ornament to the whole. To this God then under such glorious notions, adorned with such transcendent Attributes, and all possible perfections imaginable; To this King Eternal, Immortal, Invisible, the only Wise God, we are to give all honour and glory, adoring those Attributes of which we are transcribing the Copy, as far as frail humane nature will permit; and by which, only, we can declare his essence. To this transcendent Being we ought to pray without pretending to form an Idea, or similitude of his living substance, which we cannot make any likeness of, nor frame a due Image of his being without notions attending, that are unworthy of him; and such accidents as would be blemishes and imperfections, at once leading us into impiety and a snare. And to such a Being, when we have once settled a notion of him before we enter

enter upon our devotions to him, we may address our lawful petitions, and direct all the intentions of our minds, without framing any similitude ; and worship him who is, and was, the Maker of all things, sustains the Creation by his Almighty power, and influences the whole by his daily providence. Who (as I believe) cannot be drawn otherwise by the most accurate judgment, the most towering phancy, or sublimest and most retired contemplation, because he is invisible. To this universal Being, who is the cause and parent of all others, if we thus direct suitable petitions, *we shall worship God in spirit and in truth, and the Father seeketh such to worship him.* (John 4. 23.) And thus I have done with the first part of the manner of our address, in relation to the intention of our minds.

I proceed now to the second particular, to make inquiry into that manner in which we ought to pray with reference to the gesture of our bodies. Now this, in general, ought to be such as is most expressive of our humility, reverence, profound devotion, and dependence on God ; and therefore such as is used to these ends and purposes in the Regions and Countries in which

we live. For prayer testifying our religion to others, and by our outward example (for they cannot know our inward thoughts) drawing them into the same acts of devotion with our selves, as well as, according to the expectation of our Maker, to raise and signifie our own dispositions and affections to him; since, therefore, other men can no way be made sensible of the intentions of our minds, but by those representations which they receive from the external acts and gestures of our bodies, we ought to use such in prayer as may best signifie those to them; which can be no other than those by which we represent both our humility and affection to those persons with whom we converse. 'Tis true, indeed, I cannot say that the sacred Scriptures have commanded any one gesture in prayer, so strictly as to exclude all others. For in these things, an absolute necessity, at any time, becomes a reasonable dispensation. A man may be enfeebled in his limbs, lay stretch'd upon a bed of languishing, be moved to ejaculations, when he is imployed in his Trade, or occupation: He may be inclined to pray when he is walking in the field, or travelling on a journey,

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and may often be lifting his thoughts to God when he is sitting at his ordinary meals: In such cases, and others like them, he is not obliged to alter his posture; but God will accept of his secret whispers, or more outwardly express'd language; nay, the humble breathings and wishes of his mind, with, or without, the words of his mouth. And further yet, sometimes, even in publick Assemblies, a man (or woman) may be in a Croud, or his Knees so benum'd and his body wearied with the length of his devotions, that any one posture may be so uneasy, and painful too, as to blunt the sharpness of his affections, and hinder the most acceptable intention of his mind; And God forbid that the more noble part of our devotions should be slackned or interrupted by the necessary attendance on the frailty and weakness of our own bodies; for this would render them not only the restraining prisons of our souls, but their Jaylors too: And certainly he to whom our prayers are directed, being gracious and merciful, will not injoyn any burden upon men, who are humble and devout, which neither they nor

their Forefathers were able to bear. I cannot, therefore, sufficiently admire the piety and prudence of our own Church, whose Service is so admirably contrived that the frequent intermixtures of praises and thanksgivings, readings, and confessions of our faith, with our prayers and the confessions of our sins ; give frequent relief to the aged, or wearied, bodies of men, by injoyning suitable, though uniform, postures, that by their variation become easie and delightful, and advance the fervour, and affections of the mind. But that I may not deviate from this duty of Prayer : We find goodmen, in Sacred Writ, sometimes worshipping by prostration on the ground, sometimes adoring by bowing their heads, and, without doubt, kissing their hands, as the act of adoring properly signifies ; sometimes standing upon their feet, and sometimes kneeling upon their knees : But in the New Testament the latter is more frequent, though prostration is a posture more lowly than this. When Saint *Stephen* had the honour to become the first Martyr to the Faith of Jesus, next to himself, and like his Master, signaliz'd his charity,

rity, in praying for his enemies, the
 Text tells us, that *he kneeled down*
and prayed ; crying out , with a loud
voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.
 (Act. 7. 60.) When Saint Paul pray-
 ed amongst the Bishops at *Miletus*, *he*
kneeled down and prayed with them all.
 (Acts 20. 36.) When Saint Peter
 sealed the truth of Christianity by
 that eminent miracle of raising *Dorcas*
 from the dead, we are given to under-
 stand that *he kneeled down and prayed.*
 (Act. 9. 40.) And the blessed and holy
 Jesus himself, who was more worthy
 than all mankind, because he was accep-
 ted as a just and proportionable sacri-
 fice for them, and redeemed those who
 were prisoners to Death and Hell ;
 yet that he might testify the great
 humility and submission of his mind,
 did not only fall down upon his
 knees, but prostrated himself with
 his face to the ground, when, with
 a reserved submission to his Fathers
 will, he prayed, saying ; O Fa-
 ther ! *if it be possible, let this cup pass*
from me. (Matth. 26. 39.) When Saint
 Paul prayed for the *Ephesians* that
 they might not faint in the midst of
 their tribulations, *he bowed his knees*

to the father of our Lord Jesus Christ. (Eph. 3. 14.) And when, in his voyage towards *Jerusalem*, he landed at *Tyre*, at his departure from thence; himself, with the disciples, their wives, and children, kneeled down and prayed, though they were upon the shore. (Act. 21. 5.) And, certainly, we cannot possibly offend whilst we imitate such holy, and primitive, examples. 'Tis true indeed it was a custom amongst the *Jews*, especially towards the period of their Oeconomy, to pray standing in the Synagogues; and therefore we read that the *Pharisees*, like some among our selves, loved to pray standing in their Synagogues, as well as in the corners of the streets. (Math. 6. 5.) But because these did it, that by the elevation of their bodies they might be seen of men, you may not, perhaps, think it fitting to take such for an example. But, howsoever, it is no less, but more certain that the primitive Christians did, sometimes, pray standing on their feet, as well as kneeling upon their knees; For, besides the posture in their devotions on the Lords day, it is notoriously known that they did not kneel in

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in their publick worship from *Easter* to *Whitsuntide*. But then they gave these two reasons in excuse of their posture (1.) That they might by some outward gesture, and significant ceremony, express their joy for the resurrection of our Saviour. (2.) That it was in token also of their confident expectation of the descent of the Holy Ghost. Both these things were lawful and proper whilst Christianity was contemned by the Rulers of the world, and such great temptations were given to the profelytes, to this religion to apostatize. That I may draw, then, towards the conclusion of this particular; since the gestures of the body have been differently used in prayer unto God, suitable to the various wayes of signifying respect in divers Countries, and the constitutions of those Churches to whose customs men subjected themselves, and since all such things are still to be used in subordination to a greater, and more lofty, end, the raising and testifying the affections and faith of mens minds, I shall leave you to practise Saint *Austins* rules; That in private prayer, ye so frame the gestures of your bodies

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as may best conduce to the elevation of your minds, and the continuance of great devotion in your prayers : But in publick that ye conform to the commands and practice of that Christian Church, which imposes nothing sinful as a condition of her communion, within whose pale you are inclosed, that ye may not become factious, and schismatical, divide from substantials for a ceremony, nor rend the Church and make a separation for what is really, in it self, indifferent. Humility and reverence do certainly become such as address themselves to God, and he that has lived here among us, that upon the view of our usual approaches to our superiours, and the custom of the nation in their addresses to one another, can find another gesture more aptly and decently expressing these things, than bowing the body, uncovering the head, and bending the knee, may (if our superiours please who have authority to order indifferent matters) use it, and recommend it to others ; Nay, obtain a Law to force it upon all. Yet this will be but little to their profit ; since I know none that, upon such slender terms,

terms, will relinquish their own right to make way for others to enter their possessions ; because they will not make religion to consist in the use or forbearance of things that are indifferent in themselves. But, howsoever, till this time of tryal comes, we were, (in my judgment) better fulfill what God once confirmed by an Oath ; *That unto him every knee should bow , and every tongue should swear by his name.* (Isai. 45. 23.) Which Saint Paul thought good to express the subjection of mankind to the supream Being by, in the New Testament. *As I live (saith the Lord) every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God.* (Rom. 14. 11.) And, truly, when any good Christians pretend to express their real and devout subjection to God, 'tis not so well to forsake the ceremony which God himself, the command of the Church, and the reason of men using the ceremonies of this Nation, especially when it is conjoyned with custom, may render not only lawful, but expedient. But yet I must proceed farther ; That, with the former circumstances supposed, kneeling at pray-
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ers will become a duty, where the
formentioned impediments do not
plead for a necessary, and unavoida-
ble dispensation. 'Tis true, indeed,
that bodily exercise profiteth little,
(yet something it does) if not con-
joyned with the devotion of the mind,
and does not tend to the improve-
ment of the soul, in the habits of ver-
tue and true religion; But when this
accomplishes the ends to which it is
most rationally designed, it then be-
comes such a sacrifice with which God
is well pleased. *I beseech you therefore
brethren, (as St. Paul exhorts) by the
mercies of God, that ye present your bo-
dies a living sacrifice, holy, and accep-
table unto God, which is your reasonable,
divine service. (Rom. 12. 1.)* Nay
we do not worship with the whole
man, when we neglect Gods service
with a part. Moreover, it seems not
to be a reasonable service, when the
actions of the body do not accompa-
ny the affections of the mind, when
both are joyn'd together in this
world: We think it to be rational
to expresse the petitions conceived in
our hearts by the language of our
tongues: Why should we not then
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signifie our humility, that must accompany such prayers as God accepts, by those gestures that represent and expresse it? 'Tis exceeding natural to mankind to make shew of their inward affection, by external signs, and the kindest demonstrations that the actions of their bodies are able to represent; and we put a force and restraint upon our selves, when our hearts are full of fervour and devotion, and, yet, we will not manifest it by our actions and deportments. But certainly, he who has created the bodies of men as well as their souls, has an equal right to the service of both; and he that made the whole man will not be satisfied with a partial sacrifice: we must worship therefore, and fall down, and kneel before the Lord our Maker. Our redemption, also, no less calls for the homage of our bodies than it does for the reverence and devotion of our souls. The Apostle sayes, *You are bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your bodies and your spirits, which are Gods.* (1. Cor. 6. 20.) Nay, if we expect the final glorification of both, 'tis but equal that they should both conspire in all the demonstrations

ons of vertue and religion, where both may contribute their severall parts; That, so, since their interest is united, they may, in conjunction, work out their salvation with fear and trembling. Lastly, The humble and decent postures of our bodies, when we address our selves to God, do not only demonstrate the internal devotion and reverence of our minds; but, (according to the observation of all, excepting such as are unwilling to make the experiment) they excite, and continue our internal affections, recall our wanderings, and put us in remembrance of what we are about, if we find (after an excursion of our thoughts) that we are yet in the posture of prayer; when otherwise, we might by the inadvertency, or diversion of our souls, or an unusual heaviness, and oppression, in our bodies, forget the duty which we are conversant about. But especially, in our publick devotions, the devout gestures of others about us, mind us of what we should do our selves; and we cannot remain cold and stupid, when we see others express the affection and ardour of their minds, by those actions in which we commonly repre-

represent them, when by the gestures of their bodies they seem to pour out their very souls in prayer. How do we see the eyes of men sparkle with zeal, when void of all passion or Hypocrisie? How does humility, and some mens low conceits of themselves cause their bodies to stoop, and their knees to bend? How does faith and hope, again, lift up the most feeble hands, at once to beg, and receive, Gods favours? And such devout actions (if they are not hypocritical) will raise and evidence our own affections; however, must certainly inflame others. To conclude this particular, then; I cannot but speak of the external gestures of our bodies, and the inward intention and fervour of our minds, what the Poets said of *Castor* and *Pollux*; That when they are only single they portend mischief, and are the fore-runners of a Storm; But when they appear both together, they presage a fortunate passage to the Church, declaring piety in whom they shine, and a solid, and well grounded devotion. And thus I have done with the second particular referring to the manner of our prayer, which relates to the de-

deportment and gesture of our bodies.

The third and last enquiry about the manner of our prayers, is to make a search into our words and expressions, and to determine what is fitting to be done in this matter, when we speak to so great and glorious a God ; especially in our joynt and common petitions. There are not more frequent extravagancies among men exposed to the cognisance of others, than what usually proceed from the slips, or designed actions, of our tongues. These are so nimble when the body becomes heated and chafed, as if all our spirits flew thither, that 'tis difficult for some warm constitutions to afford them any rest at all ; they are so talkative when we are awak'd, that they are tatling too whilst we are asleep. Therefore the skilful and prudent Government of the tongue is the most difficult task of the Empire within our selves, and needs the prescription of a multitude of Laws, and a great and wary caution to be given us, that we may be very vigilant to stop the sallies of it, that our words may be guided with discretion. *The tongue* (saies St. James) *is a little member, but boasteth*

boasteth great things ; and he compares it to fire, a spark of which often turns Cities into ashes: such is this among our members , that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature , when it self is kindled by the flames of Hell. And therefore if any man offend not in word (saies the Apostle) the same is a perfect man, and able to bridle the whole body. (James 3. 2, 5, 6.) Now as this is so peccant in our conversation with men, so is it apt to err in our converses with God, when it assumes too much familiarity with him, becoming pert and rude, in our prayers and devotions. As some men, whom a Prince honours with his daily converses, are so sensibly blown up with the reception of his breath, that their former Acquaintance must not know them ; so, oftentimes, they become saucy to him that has advanced them, and blow his breath back upon himself, when they have first poysoned it in their own bodies. And thus is it with many men in reference to the great God that made them, uttering such language in their addressees to him as would cause men to scorn,
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and reject, their petitions; and all for want of due consideration, and impressing themselves with a just awe from the distance, and disproportion betwixt their Maker and themselves. 'Tis true, indeed, we are exhorted to come with an humble boldness *to the Throne of grace*, since we have an acceptable person to intercede for us. (*Heb. 4. 16.*) But who can think that such a Text gives encouragement to dust and ashes, to fly against the face of their great Creator, and advance their privilege into a confident rudeness? Rather, surely, the same Apostles sober advice must give a check to extravagant presumptions, and cause us to serve God in an acceptable manner, with profound reverence, and a godly fear, *because he is a consuming fire.* (*Heb. 12. 28, 29.*) To manage, therefore, our prayers unto God, in such language as may be suitable to our Maker and our selves; we may take, if we are willing, these following directions: (1.) That our words must be plain and intelligible. (2.) They ought to be grave and serious. (3.) They must be expressive and full. (4.) They ought to be as
brief

brief and short as may consist with perspicuity. And therefore, (Lastly,) they must be premeditated and fix'd.

First, our words and expressions in our solemn prayers must be plain and intelligible; Because it is impossible that a man should mind, however be affected with, that, which he does not understand; or if he is, 'tis without reason, and he does not act like a man. We have, indeed, too melancholy and woful experience of some, that, being taken with musical stroaks, and any thing which makes curious and grateful percussions upon their ears, are extreamly delighted with such sounds of words as are void of sense: But 'tis a great mistake if we think that the gratification of our senses becomes a reasonable service unto God. Prayer requires that our apprehensions and wishes keep a parallel with our words, in which we utter our wants and necessities: we may, otherwise, beg a Serpent, when we intend a Fish, and ask for a stone instead of bread. If, in publick, we understand not the language of him that offers service in our behalf, he may curse us in the name of the Devil,

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when we think he blesses us in the name of God. It cannot, at the bare mention of it, but appear, to be a strange and ridiculous service, when we offer to God we know not what. And if we could trust any man, with his bundle of infirmities, in a business of so great importance as our prayers so as to leave him either to his quick, or dull, invention, as his body or his mind is either vigorous or disturbed, so that we might with any tolerable knowledge, or due consideration, say Amen to what is uttered; or composed for us, by some men, to be delivered by our selves; yet, sure I am, we can never proportion our affections, or the intention of our minds, suitable to those expressions which we do not understand. Prayer, especially what is publick, should be a plain thing, and worded so as to be understood by all that have been duly educated in the Christian religion; and therefore it must be stripped of all the gaudy luxuries of an Orator, not weltered with Metaphors, nor darkened by any figurative allusions; but it ought to be as naked as truth, as clear as the light,
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and as plain and open as innocence it self. This must not be spoken, like the answers of the Oracles, in words that may beguile and deceive the simple ; but it ought to be as plain as the questions of the inquirers were : otherwise let the language be what it will, 'tis but like a prayer in an unknown tongue, amusing only, but not edifying, the Church ; nor can any person, who does not apprehend it, rationally pronounce Amen to it ; because he sets his seal to a blank, which men will not do in other cases ; nay, for all that he knows, to that which binds him to his own ruin : And such prayers *S. Paul* both redargues and condemns (*1 Cor. 14.*) Secondly, our words in prayer must be grave and serious, not intermixed with the levities of a Stage, as if our words and actions were to be theatrical in prayer, and a man were to make a raree shew in religion ; we must not turn our devotions into a canting burlesque, nor cause the weighty conceptions of our souls to be breathed forth in air and fancy, as if we were courting a Mistress, or a common Hall : But our prayers must be wise and grave, the

business of thought, and careful premeditation, and our words must be suited to the weight and grandeur of the matter of our petitions. What a strange thing is it to hear a man beg by a Romance, and to adorn his rags with joques or flowers? This better proclaims his madness, than his wants. What an odd thing is it when a person comes to beg an alms, and yet rants and tears his benefactor, who should bestow it? This may be expected at *Bethlem* only, but not in a Church. Certainly, therefore it must startle and amaze us to see and hear bold men thus acting towards God Almighty himself. To find persons raving in their prayers as if they would hector the great Maker of heaven and earth, and scare him into a compliance with their desires, by a loud noise, bold words, or too confident importunities; would make a rational and wise man wonder, where they had learned the Trade. Or to hear a man ridiculously groaning and yelping out his prayers in tones unbecoming solemnity, making grimaces and wry faces as if he had the gripes in his belly; or would think he walked the fields

ten, and had taken notes from the very Cripples ; Nay, to a stranger that had seen and heard both, it would admit of some consideration, to guess which was the inventor of the faculty, and he would conclude both to be artificial, but neither to be fitting in the publick service of God Almighty. Nay, though we pray upon the foundations of promises, and Jesus Christ has died for us ; yet to urge Gods gracious and free promises in such daring and strange language as if it had not been his kindness to make them, or our obedience were so compleat that he could not suspend the favours that we petition for, destroys that free grace which at other times we magnifie, and extol, in such a manner, as to leave our selves little or no duty to perform. As if God must presently be unjust to us if he does not, when we please, answer our petitions, and give us our reward. Strange ! that men, in their addresses unto God, should no better consider their distance and dependance ; but assume to themselves such familiarity with their Maker, as if they were either his equals or superiors, thus rob-

bing him of his glory that they may the better cloath themselves with shame. But shall the potsherd fly at the Pot- ters head, or dust and ashes endeavour to cloud and obscure heaven ? shall we do thus, who are formed out of the clay, whom one word from him to whom we thus rudely address, can sentence to an everlasting silence, and make the shades below our habitations ? Nay, shall he, that can cast our bodies into a grave, and our souls into most horrid darkness, in the twinkling of an eye, and both, at last, into everlasting burnings ; who has the disposal of all the blessings and miseries of this life, and the eternal rewards and punishments of the next ; shall he be addressed to, in such a manner as if we were his familiar acquaintance ? Certainly the most high and lofty one, the great God of heaven and earth, is not so small and inconsiderable a thing as some mens prayers seem to make him. Let us hear himself arguing with such rude and careless men : (Mal. i. 6.) *A son* (sayes he) *honoureth his Father, and a servant his Master ; If I be, then, a Father, where is mine honour ? And if I be a Master,* where

where is my fear? saith the Lord of Hosts unto you, O Priests! that despise my name, and yet say, wherein have we despised it? The Psalmist gives excellent advice in such a case as this: *Serve the Lord with fear; nay, our very rejoicing must be with reverence.* (Psal. 2.11.)

And if the great Kings and Judges of the earth, to whom *David* there speaks, must thus perform their duty and service to him who is higher than the highest; much more ought those who are of a meaner alloy to be admonished not to be malepert with their Maker, lest instead of favour they receive vengeance, and he gives no other answer to their prayers, but a speech of Hailstones and coals of fire. Let men therefore use such expressions in their addresses to God as may evidence some dread and awe upon their minds, and declare such humility and reverence as become those that draw nigh to God. *Saint Paul* justified himself to the *Ephesian* Bishops, by his deportment among them at all seasons; but more especially in that he had served the Lord with all humility of mind; which they could no otherways discern, but by the outward agreement

of his words and actions, (*Act. 20. 19.*) And since our words, in prayer, are only to express our inward sentiments, the thoughts and desires of our souls, 'tis as requisite, that they should be grave and serious, as they ought to be modest and humble; and as necessary too as that our minds should be qualified and adorned with such virtues when we come to speak, or present ourselves, before the great Majesty of the whole world. Nay, one is so natural a sign of the other, that when gravity and humility are planted in the soul, they will sprout forth, and spread their branches in the words of mens mouths, and deportment of their bodies: so that where these last things are wanting, we have just cause to suspect, nay, conclude, the profession, or affirmation, that men have the other to be nothing else but a sham and a pretence.

Thirdly, Our words in prayer must be expressive and full: because, otherwise, they answer not the end, for which they are uttered. For, since all our expressions in prayer, are not only to raise our devotions, suitable to the conceptions of our minds; but they are also designed to signify the wishes
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and desires of our souls, 'tis reasonable that both should run parallel, and our expressions equal our wants and necessities; or else our language cannot answer the design of uttering words in prayer. I cannot deny, but that sometimes the inward conceptions of men in private, may be too big for their mouths to express; and there a sigh, or a groan, may prevail with God, for what the tongue is not able fully to utter. *There, as the Reverend Dr. Owen more clearly expresses it, they may mourn as a Dove, or chatter as a Crane; and he says, 'tis sufficient in that condition.* But, in publick prayers, when one becomes the Orator for the rest, petitions ought to be framed so, as to express the general wants of those that are present, as Christians united into one body, being members in particular of that society, of which Christ himself is the head; that all may be concerned in such common requests, and joyn together with one heart, and with one soul; and with undivided affections, say *Amen* at the close and period.

But yet, Fourthly, Our words in prayer must be as few, and our petitions as brief, as may consist with plainness

ness and perspicuity. Not only because what is over and beyond this, seems redundant, and to no purpose, and therefore unreasonable: nor only because a tedious protraction, and unnecessary length in devotion dulls the spirits, and makes our affections unactive and stupid, (it quenching the fervor and intention of our minds) and turns much of our prayer, all whilst we remain thus indisposed, into meer babble and effusion of words, when our minds cannot accompany our expressions, or the language of another uttered in our behalf. But, as we have no example of a tedious and long prayer in the Scriptures; so have we prohibitions and arguments against it. *Solomon* exhorting to external signs of reverence and devotion when men go to the house of God. *Be not rash with thy mouth* (says he) *and let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God; for God is in heaven, and thou on earth, therefore let thy words be few,* (*Ecclesiast. 5. 1, 2.*) And if any one should unreasonably restrain this Text only to the subsequent vow; yet the argument urged why men should be then sparing of their words, will as well

well conclude in prayer as in vows, in both which things we speak to such a God as is in heaven, whilst we stand at a distance on the earth. Our Saviours advice, in his Sermon on the Mount, is, *when thou prayest, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do; for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking.* And he presently gives his own Disciples the form of a full and most expressive prayer, (*Mat. 6 7.*) Nay, if we will be inclined by his own example, (which any would think that Christians ought) even then, when, by the circumstances he was in, an enemy to his religion would conclude him to be devout, being fill'd with pain and fear of farther tortures that attended him, when he was in an agony so great, *that his sweat was as it were large glutinous drops of blood; when, as S. Matthew sayes, his soul was sorrowful, even unto death; and S. Luke tells us, that he prayed more earnestly.* Even then we find his words to be no more than these; *Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me; nevertheless, not my will but thine be done,* (*Luke 22. 42.*) Nor did the earnestness of his strong desire, force his thoughts to break

break out into a flood of expressions, but allowing himself some small intervals; continuing his devotion, he returned to his prayer, repeating again the same words; (*Matth. 26. 44.*) But I shall speak more of these Texts hereafter. To proceed therefore, to shew, that brevity is an ornament to our prayers; the very nature and usual custom of petitions, will bring a sufficient convincing testimony to all those, who have not very odd conceptions of the object to whom they make religious addresses. These, by the reason of men, are then judged to be best drawn, when they include brevity and fulness of matter; and the shorter do we usually frame them, by how much the greater the person is, to whom they are to be presented: And the reason of this may possibly be, not only, because the serious affairs of great men, that are in publick employments, will not permit much diversion; but for that they are presumed to be wise and discerning, able to understand quicker than those who are placed in a more vulgar station. A breviat may be sufficient to inform some men, when others must be largely

ly instructed from point to point ; and must have things variously diversified, and often reiterated, before they will suit with their apprehensions. And shall we think, the Omniscient God, who knows our wants before we petition, to be less intelligent, or compassionate, than men, that he stands in need of so many words, and variety of expressions, to cause him to understand, or to incline him to grant what is convenient for us? But this will be treated of in a larger manner in the Inferences from the whole discourse. And therefore this head shall be concluded with a brief answer to one plea which may be made for a long continued prayer. The objection is., that our Saviour was engaged all night in prayer, (*Luke 6. 12.*) and some other expressions, and examples too, we have in the Scriptures, that may import and signify some length in prayer. But, if we consider them ; all were either upon extraordinary occasions, or so circumstantiated, that they differed exceedingly from our present state, and cannot be a pattern unto us: Or else when Christ or his Apostles continued long in prayer, by giving themselves
short

short respits, and allowing some intervals between, they returned to the same prayers again, which might be short enough for all the objection. Yet when we have the same Spirit, and measures of assistance, with such authority and revelations as they had, and fall under their circumstances, (which can never be); their extraordinary practice may become a copy for our imitation. In the mean time, since it is most suitable to the reason of prayer, with reference to God, agreeable to our natural and unavoidable infirmities, and that infinite distance betwixt our Maker and our selves; it is fitting that our prayers should be as brief and short as may consist with plainness and perspicuity.

And therefore, Lastly, Upon the view of all this, it is convenient, and, for the most part, necessary too, that both the matter and expressions of our prayers should be fixed and premeditated. For if our words in prayer ought to be plain and intelligible; if they must be both grave and serious; if they ought to be full in the expression of our wants; and if they must be as brief and short, as may consist with perspicuity;

perspicuity ; how can it be possible, that the quickest men, subject to many infirmities in their bodies, that must and will, many times, cloud their minds, should, upon a sudden, without a previous and exact consideration, word their own, and the common desires of other men, according to the order, and method, and importance of things, unless they have, before hand, invented, digested, and reduced both their matter and expressions into a well studied and set form of prayer : He that adventures to pray *extempore* in a publick audience, is so selfish in the matter of his petitions, and oftentimes so ridiculous in the expressions, that it is impossible all should be able to say *Amen* to several things petitioned for, if they at all use their understandings, and do not implicitly joyn upon the authority of the gifted person. But you will find more of this, in a place of this Discourse, more particularly reserved for it. I do not deny, but matter and words may present themselves on a sudden for private and more brief ejaculations, or intermix themselves in our single devotions, beyond the form which we may generally

ly use; either through the great enlargement of our minds and affections, or upon sudden and unexpected necessities, or by recollecting in our memories something that was either before omitted, or our form does not directly enough, or in particulars express. But in publick, where petitions ought to be so general, that all present may say *Amen*, and by this signifie their assent and wishes, it is not only convenient, but necessary too, that men should have some time to judge, and be acquainted with what is delivered in their behalf, before they give their assent to it; otherwise they pray not with judgment and understanding, which ought to go before, and lead their affections, and not permit the passions to fall forth, without taking notice of it in the way. Now I cannot see, how this can possibly be done, without a form, which those that joyn in may be acquainted with. However, methink, to us Christians, there are several arguments to be taken from universal practice in former ages, and reasons also from the holy Scriptures, which are sufficient to determine us in this affair, and to recommend this method of addressing

dress'ing our selves to Almighty God.

First, The antiquity of publick forms of prayers, and benedictions, wherein also prayer is included, is so evident, that both Jews and Christians have agreed in this, notwithstanding the introduction of the one religion superseded and evacuated the other. Under the Law, we find the prescription of a form by God himself, wherewith the Priests were to bless the people, by invoking and wishing that Gods blessing might descend upon them, and they were the authoritative instruments, in this method, to convey it to them, (*Numb. 6. 22, 23, &c.*) Nay, there is a form of prayer made and prescribed by the same God for those to rehearse who had payed their tythe, every third year; as any one may see both the form, and the command to use it, (*Deut. 26. from v. 12. onward*). What are the Books of the *Psalms* of *David*, but a form of Confessions, Petitions, and Thanksgivings, which were used in the worship of God in the Temple, delivered to the Levites, in the several Quires, according to the Ordinance of the King of *Israel*? When
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they sang together by course, in praising and giving thanks unto the Lord, *because he is good, for his mercy endureth for ever?* (*Exra 3. 10, 11.*). Nay, and what seems to me matter of wonder, these very *Psalms* translated into *English Metre*, are yet sung in those dissenting Congregations, who refuse otherwise to pray to God by a form. But to leave the form prescribed to the *Jews*, and accordingly practised; because, according to some men of quick invention, and volubility of language, they were a carnal and an heavy people, to be led on in a dull and formal way. Yet unless the opposers of forms of prayer, will be too nimble for the Apostles themselves, and account them dull and carnal; we shall find forms in the New Testament, not only composed, but enjoined too. None surely can be unacquainted, that our Saviour taught his Disciples to pray; and gave them a form, not only for imitation, but for use; men do not, I hope, so learn Christ. 'Tis true, *S. Matthew* delivers the command, *After this manner therefore pray ye*, (*Mat. 6. 9.*): yet *S. Luke*, recording the same prayer, when in another year, and on another

another occasion, our Saviour delivered it, gives us the account of our Lords prescription, in these words, *When ye pray, say, Our Father, &c.* (Luke 11. 1.). Yet this difference can only infer these two things, (1.) That, in all our compositions of prayer, in which we enlarge the words of our petitions, suitable to the enlargement of our minds, we should have regard, and bear some proportion to this pattern which Christ himself has given for our direction. And (2.) That we should use also the words themselves in which our Saviour has taught us to pray; supplying the imperfections of our own invention, by the fulness of that prayer, which he has prescribed for all true Christians to use. And such a method we find followed by the Church, till the vanity of some men, who thought themselves wiser (and they may be accounted more fanciful) than the aged, designed to suit their expressions and tones, to captivate the affections and passions of the multitude, for ends at first best known to themselves; but since, with a vengeance, declared to others. Though in the mean time they offered unto God

fancy for devotion, and, out of their pretended wisdom, the sacrifice of fools : And I pray God there be no Knavery in it, that was also intended to the people.

Secondly, I argue for forms of prayer to be used in publick, because the Minister then is the mouth of the congregation, and is to be supposed to utter all by their consent, and to pray in their names, testifying their unity of affection, by their consent in prayer. And this so prevails with the great God of infinite goodness, *that if but two shall agree together on earth, as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done, for them by the Father which is in heaven.* (Matth. 18. 19.) Unity of affection and consent in prayer, is that which renders our publick devotions so acceptable to God. This gives them strength and vertue, causes our prayers to ascend as incense, and the lifting up of our hands to be as an evening sacrifice. Now there cannot, in my opinion, be this consent, and unity of affection in prayer, but where there is an uniformity in calling upon God ; that all, let them come whence they will into any publick place

place of devotion, where a congregation is assembled to offer their joynt prayers to God, (if they are in communion with, and frequent the Churches) being before acquainted with the service and prayers which all there make to God, they may unite themselves immediately to them, and say Amen, to testifie their consent ; And if any thing be pass'd over before they come, being morally assured from the continual custom and use there, especially the Minister being pre-engaged, both by an oath, and severe penalties attending the violation, to use no other form of worship, than what is prescribed in the common Rubricks and prayers of the Church ; I say, if any of the prayers are passed over, by uniting in the rest, with an easie recollection of what has been already uttered, a man being acquainted with it by common use, may, at least better than by any other method, impossible to be done in extemporary effusions, joyn himself to the congregation, and obtain some interest in the whole service ; And especially if, under these circumstances, he is heartily intent in the prayer of *S. Chrysostom*,

and some others in the conclusion of our worship ; and yet, pray with some good understanding ; though it cannot be so well as if he had consented, from part to part, with all ; and he may not depart without a blessing, if it were not a wilfull omission, and neglect, but only a mistake of time, and a misfortune.

But if this reasoning will not prevail ; yet, Thirdly, I argue the lawfulness and expedience of forms of prayer, from the great example of Christ himself. (And certainly Christians ought not to think that they can imitate a better). For we find him, in his agony in the Garden, when his soul was sorrowful even unto death, and multiplied miseries oppressed and tortured him, to use only this short prayer ; *O my Father ! if it be possible, let this Cup pass from me : Nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt.* (Matth. 26. 39.) And when, upon the same occasion, he returned again to his devotion, we read that he used the same prayer ; and the Evangelist has very little altered the phrase ; which yet our Saviour seemed not to change at all. For when he informs us that he

he prayed the third time, he tells us that he used the same words. (*Matth.* 26. 44.) However, if this instance may miscarry, as I see no reason why it should; yet 'tis plain, that when he was tortured upon the Cross, and in the height of his passion invocated God, his words were a form long before used by *David*; and it was a part, if not the whole of the 22. Psalm, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?*

Fourthly, I argue for set forms of prayer from the practice of *S. John Baptist* and his Disciples, who probably borrowed it (as *Mr. Mede* in his *Diatriba* hints) from a custom among the Doctors of *Israel*, to deliver some certain forms of prayer, to their Disciples as a badge and symbol of their discipleship. However it fares with this notion; yet, 'tis evident that the Baptist himself (who, the Scripture sayes, was more than a Prophet) did prescribe some form of prayer for his followers to use, though we find not upon record, what it was; yet probably it might be a prayer near the sense and expressions of that of our Lord; For his form, as to words and

phrases, was before in the Jewish forms, a little varied; and therefore *Grotius* infers that the Great Lord of the Christian Church was very far from all affectation of any novelty, which was not necessary. But, to let these things pass; The Scripture it self plainly informs us that *John* the Baptist did give his Disciples a form, by which he taught them to pray. For when our Saviour had, as the Text declares, in a certain place ended his own prayer; one of his Disciples petitioned him to teach them to pray, as *John* also taught his Disciples. And our Saviour presently, without any other intervening discourse, replies in answer to his desire, *When ye pray, say Our Father which art in Heaven, &c.* (Luk. 11. 1, 2.) So that either Christ's is not a form, although it is commanded to be used, which no man of sense can say; or our Saviour eluded the request of his Disciple, in answering only a part of it, but not the whole, which no Christian will be bold to affirm; or if he did at that time teach his own Disciples to pray as, or in that manner, as *John* also taught his, then it must be necessarily

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ly infer'd that *John* the *Baptist* prescribed a form for his followers to pray by.

Fifthly, There is no inconvenience, but great advantage in a studied, and set, form of prayer; when extemporary and unpremeditated devotions, uttered in present and sudden language, can neither evade the one, nor be the instrument of the other. Studied forms of prayer may be considered often, and receive the censures and corrections of many wise and learned men, before they are exposed to common judgment; and they that are to joyn in them, upon view of them before hand, may be able to suit their affections, and the intentions of their minds, both to the matter, and also the expressions, which in extemporary prayers they cannot do, but must on a sudden be bound up to the matter, words, and expressions of another; that I may not say, to the broken sense, extravagant phrases, dark Metaphors, frequent interruptions, or bodily infirmities distracting, often, another man; or to the effects of those fears or inadvertencies, that may often attend a man bewildred through worldly cares, or disturbed with the thoughts and troubles of his mind.

Forms

Forms of prayer, studied and reviewed, are not subject to such impertinencies, tautologies, and vain repetitions, that too sudden effusions frequently produce, when there is a defect in the invention of matter, fluency of language, or apt words to express the petitions men are willing to present. Nay, the most ignorant and illiterate may, by the frequent audience of publick set forms of prayer, and quickening their memories, by the due intention, and affection of their minds, when these are devoutly and distinctly pronounced, by the Minister of a congregation, or the Master of a Family, fix and remember some things and expressions, for their more private and single use, and at last be able to express their supplications to God for the private relief of their necessities, and in this the publick language of the Church, when no such thing can possibly be accomplished, by hearing the same matter variously phrased, and such expressions as are alter'd and diversified in respect of order and position of words, and intermixed with new fancies and obscurities, and frequent jumbings and interpositions of confessions, and

and thanksgivings, and words that, declaring the excellencies of God, provoke men to acts of adoration or raptures in the midst of what methodically should be prayer and petitions. So that they who possess the room of the unlearned, if they were able with due judgment and affection to keep pace with him who, in this way, can invent and utter prayer, with neither; yet they can no more carry away what may assist them in their private retirements, than the gifted man is able afterwards to remember and repeat his own prayer. For, in these sudden and upremeditated effusions of men in their prayers unto God, their inventions so vary the phrases, and transpose the matter, that when all is the same, yet, they are so differently placed between antecedents and consequents, that they are frequently altered, till they become obscure; and are so clouded either with Fogs or Dust, that a considering man of parts and memory is not able to find either out, when they are buried in the midst of rubbish; and how should another search out that which he that hid it cannot find?

Sixth-

Forms of prayer, studied and reviewed, are not subject to such impertinencies, tautologies, and vain repetitions, that too sudden effusions frequently produce, when there is a defect in the invention of matter, fluency of language, or apt words to express the petitions men are willing to present. Nay, the most ignorant and illiterate may, by the frequent audience of publick set forms of prayer, and quickning their memories, by the due intention, and affection of their minds, when these are devoutly and distinctly pronounced, by the Minister of a congregation, or the Master of a Family, fix and remember some things and expressions, for their more private and single use, and at last be able to express their supplications to God for the private relief of their necessities, and in this the publick language of the Church, when no such thing can possibly be accomplished, by hearing the same matter variously phrased, and such expressions as are alter'd and diversified in respect of order and position of words, and intermixed with new fancies and obscurities, and frequent jumbings and interpositions of confessions, and

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Sixth.

Sixthly, If forms of prayer in publick devotions are either inconvenient, or unlawful; then they must be so in relation to the persons that utter them, or else to those who are concerned in joyning with, and consenting to them: (1.) If they are inconvenient, or unlawful to the Minister only; why should the people trouble themselves, or any man startle them about it? Unless men think it to be a glory to them to disturb the minds and Religion of the devout; raise clouds, that they may have the honour to dispel them; bring scruples and pains into mens consciences, that Casuistical Divinity may come the more into fashion, and they, like Quacks, may sit gravely in their Chairs to scry waters, and resolve doubts, and take Fees of their wandring Patients. This is plain forcing of a Trade, and making men sick, that they may cure the disease, or rather live by the continuance of it. For why should the people perplex their minds about that in which only the Minister is concerned? Let every man bear his own burden; and in this case, relating to publick worship, we are willing, and chuse,

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to bear ours. *For the Son shall not bear the iniquity of the Father, nor the Father of the Son: The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him, (Ezek. 18. 20.).* Yet certainly he who has duly considered that intencion of mind, which is to accompany the matter and expressions of our prayers, will not charge a Minister with a fault, because he cannot effect that which is impossible, to mind three or four things at the same instant; inventing matter and words to express it, at the same time, in which he must reflect upon what he has invented, before he can understand it himself; and raise his affections and desires in proportion to what he utters when he prayes, and direct his intentions to the great God, to whom he addresses. Or else those that are so much for these extemporary effusions must conclude that the Minister need not pray himself, whilst he is busie in inventing matter and words for others; but that it is sufficient that he teaches others to be devout, when he himself has no devotion at all; and that his business in the congregation is to make prayers

prayers for others, not for himself. (2.) If a form of prayer be either inconvenient or unlawful to the people, then indeed all the former reasoning is ineffectual, and more will be so, which is yet behind; But then whoever asserts this, as none but a mad man will without limitation do; I have this, farther, in this place to urge against him, that there must be no publick prayer at all. For all prayer is either uttered in words that are premeditated or conceived before; and this, on all hands will be yielded to be a form. Or else it must be delivered in such language, promoted by what helps soever, as he that pronounces it did not think of before he is call'd to utter it, which they that affect it, call either praying *extempore*, or by the spirit: but whatever of this nature is uttered by a Minister, in a publick congregation, will, howsoever, be a set form to the people. For both matter and words must be framed and fixed by the Ministers invention, and pronounced too, before they come to the peoples ears; they must understand and consider them before they can rationally consent to the petitions, and,

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III

and, with earnest wishes, say Amen; And consequently, whatever 'tis to the Minister, (which, though I have the faculty, I cannot know, unless I were an Enthusiast, reason and antiquity being wholly excluded by a late Writer in this case) it must be all one to the people, whether the prayer be premeditated or *extempore*. But, the truth is, they who manage this controversie, on that side opposite to our Church, turn their dark parts to us, as the Moon does before a Change; and like the little Foxes that spoil our vines, whilst the grapes yet hang tender upon the branches, are so hard hunted in this matter, that, after they have run out at length several miles from the place, where they were first unkennel'd, they are fain to take shelter in the Woods, march upon dead, or quick-set, hedges, and at last will have no refuge but to earth themselves, when the darkness of the night hinders their being digg'd out again. However, if, in the mean time, we well watch and observe these persons, we may find them out by the light of the morning, when they thump and digg to make their way through; And for the greater

greater part (though some are of a more quick and crafty invention) if we well observe the frequent prayers of any one man pretending this gift, we shall find it to be either the effect of a nimble nature, quick invention, with volubility of language pronounced with an endearing tone in Scripture phrases canted to the people; or else an art of expressing himself, by the strength of memory, or frequent use, most readily, and sometimes, though not always, prudently, in phrases and sentences diversified and transposed, according to the various positions of the matter, and to be a faculty only of amusing, but not edifying, the people, making grateful percussions on their ears, and screwing up their affections by turning round the wheels, and all to be but mechanical Clock-work, or a Jack to roast meat for their own bellies. For how often have we heard these gifted men pretending to pray in an unpremeditated method, or none at all, as the fruit of a sudden and quick invention, whilst they were willing it should be believed that all, even their very matter and words, were darted into them by the spirit

spirit of God, that all might be shot back to heaven ; yet, upon wise recollection by memory and observation, we have concluded that their nimble effusions have consisted of many pieces of set forms jumbled together, (like *Epicurus's* atoms) by a fortuitous concurrence ; or at least of many preconceived sentences expressing the matter of former petitions in a new dress, diversified by art, varied and fixed in divers places , as they present themselves to the memory or the fancy, so that this is often like the changing of bells, and may be managed by the same art ; four will make four and twenty, and upon five they may ring sixscore. I shall leave this therefore, at present, as a point that deserves no farther consideration among any religious men that are thinking and wise ; but shall proceed on to the enquiries which remain that may be of more general use and benefit.

C H A P. VI.

I Come now to the fifth head propounded to be discoursed on; to make enquiry into what religious and devout men ought to pray for; that the matter of our petitions may be such as comports with wisdom, and prudence, and the general rules of Gods word, as well as the matter lawful and convenient. Now to enlarge this particular, by mentioning all those things which the peculiar or accidental wants of men may make necessary to become the subject of Christian petitions, would not only swell and enlarge this head of my Discourse beyond its just bounds and proportion; but also far exceed my skill; and I fancy, any bodies else; even the quick'st and most artificial extemporary mans, though he were never so contemplative, and formally grave; unless he might have a faculty of omniscience, which more ignorant mortals cannot find in themselves. For though we might be able (without inspiration) to instance in all those general matters that might

might be fitting to be ingredients into our Commonprayer, which we are to use in society with others, as we are all members of one body, of which Christ is the glorious and supream head, during the remaining part of his mediatory office ; yet, the conditions, circumstances and imployments of mens lives as they are individual, and distinct from each other, are so multiplied and diversified, that 'tis impossible for one man, unless he could know and experience the concernments of all, to enumerate the particulars that, one time or other, ought to become the subject matter of single mens petitions ; For a man may beg what is convenient or necessary for himself, that may be to anothers great damage ; which, if improved but a little in its length, will be a great argument against such particular confessions, thanksgivings, and prayerstoo, as are offered in behalf of a large multitude from the view of a single mans particular sins, favours received, or wants, that he needs a supply for, when few, or none, or, however, all cannot in judgment assent to. And therefore, as to the matter of single mens petitions, no other rules can be gi-

ven, but what may suit, some time or other, with the common frailties and infirmities of men; and we must leave their various and present necessities, or what they, upon a probable prospect, view, to influence themselves, assisted by the rules and aids of the holy Spirit, prudently, with the help of their own reason, to direct them in the great and important affair of petitioning God with reference to themselves. However, in general, we are to pray for temporal, spiritual, and eternal blessings: yet not without some difference of affection; the first, being less necessary, and inferiour also to the other two, ought to be petitioned for, with a lower degree of ardency and affection, and at all times in subserviency to the latter. Now in order to the obtaining of such things as are the lawful subject of our prayers, we must petition the removal of all impediments that may obstruct the possession of those good things, which we ask of God, from whom comes every good and perfect gift; And these are, especially, our sins and temptations, and the evil ends to which we may design the blessings themselves, when once obtained.

tained. Further, we must in our prayers beg those assistances and helps which God has promised, to encourage the means in the obtainment of any lawful design ; and these are the influences of his blessing, and the aids of his holy Spirit. Such things as these, as they are the purchase of the blood of Christ, and graciously promised, in Sacred Writ, to those who qualify themselves for their reception ; so any promise being the foundation of our prayer, we may ask the thing included in it without sin or danger, provided we understand the promise aright ; and we shall receive a gracious answer to our petition, if we ask not amiss, or the thing prayed for may be convenient or necessary at that time. And this is all that I intend to say, with reference to those general rules, to guide our devout prayers by, according to which, we may take some measure of our particular wants, and discern the lawful matter of our petitions. But since we are to pray for persons also, as well as things, and not only for our selves but others ; universal charity, and the precept of loving our neighbours as our selves, will ratio-

nally conclude that, in general, the matter of our prayers for others must be the same (only *mutato nomine*) with the petitions for our selves; and will only admit of some variation according to the change of circumstances and relations; And therefore I shall add no new directions, but what may easily be collected from the former. I need not, I hope, pretend to remember, much less to inform, Christian men that they must pray for Kings, and all in authority; for parents and benefactors, for the household of faith, or the conversion of Infidels; for the Ministers of Gods Word and Sacraments, of what degree soever, especially those to whom originally was committed the government and conduct of Christs Church upon earth; for the prosperity of those from whom we receive our education and knowledge, or any of the conveniences of this life, if they are living: The universal race of mankind must some way or other have an interest in our prayers. *I exhort (says S. Paul) that, first of all, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men: for Kings, and all that are in authority,*
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that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty; For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour. (1 Tim. 2. 1, 2, 3.) Such things as these, if we duly and sincerely practise, will cause our prayers to ascend to heaven, like incense it self, whose smoak joyned and pierc'd the clouds, and approached even the Throne of God. And as the just, here, live by faith, so must they live and die in prayer; as the *Phœnix*, with her wings, kindles her own funeral pile, and then dies in the midst of perfumes.

But, notwithstanding these general directions and rules, we must needs fail in the matter of our prayers, if we should, at any time, petition those for our selves, or others, which things God has either forbidden us to ask, or, however, not promised to grant. If we pray for what he has forbidden us to ask, we then sin against his command, and then our sacrifice becomes our sin, and the motives to it are a perfect snare. And if we pray for what he has never promised to grant, we cannot, then, pray in faith; because we cannot, without presumption, believe that we shall receive that, in virtue of our

prayer, which God has never engaged to give, and 'tis plain impudence to expect from him that he will make such returns to our petitions. Nay, the Apostle says, *let not that man think that he shall receive any thing from the Lord, who does not ask in faith*; but, for want of Gods promise, must waver in his hope, and he has sufficient reason to suspect his success. (*James 1. 6, 7.*) To make Gods promise the foundation of our petitions, will hinder our prayers from interfering with his will, to which our desires must always be subjected, by the eminent example of our Saviour himself, even when he prayed for the diversion of his passion. *Nevertheless, not my will, but thine be done.* (*Luk. 22. 42.*) And this is suitable to a comprehensive petition in that prayer, which he gave to his Disciples, and in and by them commanded all Christians to use, and imitate: *Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.* Now this excludes three things from being the subject matter of our prayers. (1.) Such as are not necessary to us in that rank and station, in which we live, or, if it may be better expressed, according to the figure we make in the world. For the prayer for other things

things above us argues nothing less than covetousness and ambition within our selves, and then we regard iniquity in our hearts, and being thus possessed, the Lord will not hear us. Such petitions are directed to a wrong end, the things we ask being superfluous to us in that condition in which God has placed us, wherewith we ought to be content. Our prayers must not exceed our station, 'till Gods providence moves us to an higher seat. (2.) Those things must be excluded from our prayers that are inconvenient for God to grant, or for us to receive. Some things which may be lawful in themselves, without reference to circumstances attending, may yet be so unsuitable to Gods providence in governing the world, that the concession of them may thwart and contradict it. Again, other things may be unlawful for us to receive; Because such may be our tempers and dispositions, that, when we possess them, we may prove troublesome to our selves, or very great disturbers of others. For some men that may be quiet, peaceable, and kept in order, in a lower degree, may prove factious
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and turbulent, when mounted into an higher Sphere; 'Tis true, we have heard of a Dictator drawn from the Plough-tail, who yet has behaved himself excellently in his office; and we have had some good Bishops, who never knew what 'twas to be a Parish Priest: But rare examples will not annul general observation, when Divine providence makes men leap into seats of honour; God overlooks the whole world, and orders the parts with reference to the whole; His ways are oftentimes unsearchable, and his paths past finding out. Yet this we are assured of, that as power and authority discover the disposition of him that has it, though his low condition might hide it before; so persons that may be modest and humble, whilest God keeps them in an inferior order, may become proud and insolent, when they are placed under a Canopy of honour, and have a larger confluence of the things of this world, and may turn the grace of God into wantonness: And if God should grant such mens petitions, as sometimes he does, in anger to them, for the punishment of others, or for many designs hidden

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hidden from us ; we usually find this true, that *Asperius nihil est, &c.* Lastly, such things must be excluded from the matter of our prayers, that tend to the promotion of our own sins, the supporting the wretched tyranny of the Devil, or the cruel oppressions of wicked men. *For the righteous Lord loveth righteousness, his countenance doth behold the upright.* (Psal. 11. 7.) And we cannot expect that prayers, wishing those things that are contrary to this, should find any acceptance with God, *who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity*, or bestow things upon the children of men, that may strengthen the hands of wickedness, or give encouragement to their sins. From all which we may easily conjecture why God, many times, suspends his answers, or denies our requests. As he does afflict his people in faithfulness ; so does he, in kindness, reject their prayers, as well as grant, or deny some in wrath. For sometimes we are not in a present capacity to receive what we ask, and most earnestly desire. We frequently come to the house of prayer, when yet our sins lay at the door, and most abominable hypocrisie lodges
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in our hearts. We have not, many times, prepared our souls according to the preparation of the Sanctuary, but either for want of humility, or charity, we must leave our gift before the Altar, or when we offer it we do not perform it with true devotion, and a suitable and earnest intention of our minds. We oftentimes pray amiss, and so lose the fruit of our requests, nay, we fail not only in the designs of our prayers, but even in the manner of performance. We are not like the importunate Widow, which Parable was delivered to this end, to encourage men always to pray and not to faint. (*Luk. 18. 1.*). Or else we do not, as *Cornelius* did, joyn alms with our prayers; for these are an admirable preparative to devotion, or an excellent conclusion to close our petitions with, they help to lift up our desires to heaven, being such a sacrifice *with which God is well pleased.* (*Heb. 13. 16.*) Or else we come before the Maker of the world with some great sin wasting our consciences, which we have not confess'd and repented of, and the fear of this may justly contract our hearts, and imprison
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son our spirits, and whilst this hovers over our heads, we cannot see to the God that made us, nor to him who is the Redeemer of our souls, and therefore wanting faith, our petitions can neither be accepted or answered; Our sin, that we have not repented of, hangs over us as a thick cloud, hindring our prayers from ascending to heaven, and intercepts the favours and mercies of God, causing them to recoil back to himself. Nay, we too frequently approach his presence with hearts ungrateful for the mercies we have received; and though we have obtained, what Divine Providence, both in spirituals, and temporals, flowing from infinite wisdom and power, has hitherto thought fitting to bestow, we, instead of being thankful for our receipts, murmur and repine, because we have no more. Like persons here below, we are perpetually grumbling at the Governments of this World, because we have not what we wish for, though perhaps we have more than we deserve. And further, as this is a great argument, that we take not the true measures of our selves; so we are extremely willing that Gods thoughts should

should be like our own, rather than our wishes should be regulated by his wisdom ; And therefore he frequently denies our requests in prayer, because, being guided by our narrow and short prospect of things, we sometimes ask ~~that~~ which, if granted, would prove our ruin. *For (as St. Paul says,) we know not what to pray for as we ought, (Rom. 8. 26.)* We have not the just view of our selves, and cannot with certainty see what is future, and we know not what a day may bring forth. God, therefore, who is acquainted with our frame, and is able to look through future contingencies, such as are so in their natural Causes, but foreseen by him, who is the God of nature, who sees which way the balance will incline, because he knows the paths of his own Providence : this great God, as he many times suspends his favours, till we are in a capacity to receive them ; so, like a tender Father, he will not give us bread to spoil, nor a Serpent to sting us. And therefore, sometimes, when he accepts our prayers, he adapts his favours to our necessities ; now giving us more than we ask, and then cutting his answers

swers short of our petitions, because he, in his infinite wisdom, knows, that we ask too much : He wisely considers, what store-house we have, and our capacities of receiving what we pray for, and changes the seasons, and opportunities, to bestow his gifts, and confers them according to the good pleasure of his will, and his most wise contrivance in governing the World, and us, as members of this great Community. And therefore, sometimes he gives us one thing more convenient, when we most earnestly beg another ; now changing the means which we desire to obtain an end , affording other that may be more effectual ; sometimes, he changes the end it self, and orders the means we have petitioned for, in order to one design, to produce what is better, and much more advantageous to us ; yet, in all these things, he acts best, because he does that which is most convenient for us, and most suitable to his Wisdom, and Providence. Finally, we may petition for many things, which, if granted to us, would thwart God's general Government of the World, or some particular wise design, which we are yet ignorant of ; and there-

therefore, in such cases, he accepts our prayer as an acknowledgement to himself, though he does not grant the particulars of it. Or, Lastly, we may sometimes beg such things as may prove incentives to our own, or others sins; and then, 'tis no wonder, that he denies our requests, *because we ask amiss, that we may consume it on our lusts or pleasures,* (James 4. 3.) And thus I have finished my fifth Enquiry into what things men ought to pray for.

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C H A P. VII.

I Proceed now to the Sixth Head propounded to be treated of in this discourse; To enquire into the latitude of prayer, with reference to those who are to perform, and joyn in it; because I find what is called *the Spirit of Prayer*, confined, by some, to those only, who are endowed with the Spirit of God; nay so, as if that spake in them: And, by their selecting and culling members for their religious societies, or Churches, so called, out of the visible professors of Christianity, who having been baptized, were made members of Christs Church upon earth, that they design to have Saints only to partake of publick Ordinances among them, as well as they can; and to pretermitt, or else exclude others. I shall therefore, in this Chapter, briefly enquire, whether prayer be an universal duty, or only concerns good men, or true Saints? Now, though such a question,

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 would think, might be, on a fudden,
 answered; and a return might be made
 as extemporary, as fome mens prayers
 are, or the Books of thofe, who only
 Hem, and Spit them forth, with little
 or no confideration: yet it muft ad-
 mit of fome debate, for that the ini-
 quity of times, and the perverfe wits
 of fome men, have rendered it ufe-
 ful, and neceffary too: Becauſe, we find
 ſome thinking and melancholy men,
 (unleſs they are perſons who deſerve
 a more ſevere denomination) even, in
 this lower world, endeavouring to
 make a ſeparation neceſſary betwixt
 the *Tares* and the *Wheat*, though our
 Saviour ſayes, *Let both grow together*
until the Harveſt, (*Matth. 13. 30.*)
 But, however, they give too much oc-
 caſion to diſtruſt the prayers of mixed
 Congregations; which is a miſfortune
 no way to be provided againſt in their
 own; unleſs they were diſcerners of
 hearts, and could better diſtinguiſh be-
 twixt the Hypocrite and ſincere Chriſ-
 tian, than by thoſe inward and ob-
 ſcure marks, by which they deſcribe
 Saints in the dark. But, however, this
 I cannot but believe; That the neglect,
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inadvertency, or wicked disposition of one man, cannot hinder the acceptance of the devotion of another, if there be any communion in prayer through the world, that is publick in a congregated assembly : no more than the vain glory of the Pharisee obstructed the Petition of the humble Publican : or, to come full home to the point ; than *Judas* hindered the grateful services of Christs Disciples, because he was one of the twelve. Nay, a contrary notion, and in pursuance of it, a forbearance of all joint petitions, till we were assured, that no wicked man were among us, would destroy all publick, and family, prayers : Because we cannot have such an assurance ; and we can, in this case, at most, make only probable conjectures ; unless those men will pretend to know the hearts of others, who, if we may believe themselves, are ignorant of their own ; and quote a Text, according to their own sense, to confirm it. * That *the heart of man is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked, who can know it ? (Jer. 17. 9.)*. But, notwithstanding all this, there are some cases, in which, the great God will not hear, though good men intercede and pray.

As, when the most of a community have fallen into, and yet continue, obstinately enough, in the commission of such crying sins, that a general calamity is judged, by divine wisdom, fit to be brought upon it, for the utter ruine of the members, when an irrevocable sentence is gone forth against them; if further consideration does not bring them to repentance, and the amendment of their lives. Then, though *Noah*, *Daniel*, and *Job* were in it, they shall neither deliver Son nor Daughter; they shall, at most, only deliver their own souls by their righteousness, (*Ezek. 14. 20.*) Yet their goodness and prayers may avail, even in such a day, to the rescue of themselves. But to come nearer to the point in hand; we find, in some other cases, where Gods sentence is not absolute, but conditional, and there yet remains some hopes of repentance, that wicked mens prayers have been heard for themselves, when they have resolved to amend for the future. And this was the case of that great and vast City of *Niniveh*, whose sin was so lofty and aspiring, that it pierced the Clouds, and ascended before the Throne of God: yet when

when the Prophet had, according to his Commission, openly declared their intended ruine ; and, by limiting it to a time, proclaimed, from that power above the Clouds, that at the end of forty days, their City and the inhabitants should be destroyed : when they believed this, and proclaimed a Fast, and humbled themselves, by giving publick testimony of their sorrow, and resolution of amendment, (*Jonah 3. 6.*) God saw their works, that their resolutions were, not only sighing and snivling pretensions ; but that they were turned from their evil wayes ; and then he repented of the evil that he said he would do unto them, and did it not. But, for a full and final resolution ; since prayer is made to Almighty God, not only, in order to receive what we petition for ; but also to testify our dependence on, and subjection to, that being to whom we pray : If wicked men did not accomplish the former end, yet it is most certain, that they may gain the latter ; and even this will sufficiently prove the lawfulness of wicked mens prayers. But this is not all : For, 'tis plainly evident, that God does grant the petitions of wicked

men, when, under Christianity, they have fallen into some habits of sin, after Baptism, that did at first regenerate them; particularly, as to many things that concern this life, and are the fruits of his general providence; and by this he proclaims his goodness to the world. *For he maketh his Sun to rise on the evil and the good; and sendeth rain, as well to refresh the sinners land, as the inheritance of the Saints, (Matth. 5. 45.)* And even this consideration does not only restrain the excesses and violence of such kind of men, and cause them to moderate their vices. But, it obliges the better natured and more ingenuous persons among them, frequently to forsake their sins, and to grow more towardly, by Gods granting their requests in such things as these. The great God is so gracious, that he has a general love to mankind, and is good to them as they are the workmanship of his own hands: he hates nothing that he ever made, but when it alters and discomposes its own being. Nay, in relation to the universal race of men, *He would that all these should be saved, and come to the practical knowledge of*
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the truth, (1 Tim. 2. 4.). And therefore, when a wicked man prayes from a powerful and strong natural desire, God will hear his petition as far as it is good, and his prayers aim at just designs. Otherwise, we have all (at least, I must confess for my self) such an unhappy mixture of evil and good, that all our prayers may justly be hindered of a good success. Nay, supposing, that the Grace of Almighty God must concur with the desires and endeavours of men, *to turn them from darkness unto light, and from the power of Satan unto God,* (which, surely, none among us will deny): How should men be converted from the error of their ways, if they have no hope of praying, with success, *Turn us, O good Lord, and so shall we be turned?* I know there are some Texts in Sacred Writ, that may deterr wicked men from praying; nay, sometimes others also, whose thoughts, being the result of false principles, or melancholy and untoward humours, possess themselves with the conceipt, that they are still in an unregenerate state; when, by shaking off the one, and curing the other, the day clears up upon them, and they find

they were only under a mistake. Such a Text is that of the blind man, misunderstood, to whom our Saviour restored his sight, (John 9.31.) *We know that God heareth not sinners* : And that of Solomon, *The Sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord*, (Prov. 15.8.) and others of the like sound. That I may therefore preserve such Texts sacred, and give a just state of this thing ; It must be (as it is frequently) observed, that there are sins of infirmity, or such as are attended with wilfulness and presumption. Sins of infirmity, I call those, which escape from us by a sudden surreption, when we happen to be inadvertent, or to be drawn aside through the violence of most powerful temptations, when we use, what we can, the means to suppress them , abating still for the common frailties and infirmities of men. And these, if we do not afterwards allow them, or think upon the commission with some delight, but disclaim and hate them, if we repent of the acts, and are more cautious and vigilant for the time to come , are expiated by the sufferings and satisfaction of Christ, and shall not hinder the audience of our prayers. But then there

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are, also, such sins, as, by frequent commissions, are improved into habits, which we act wilfully with delight and pleasure; and these denominate men wicked, set them at open enmity with God, and are acts of publick hostility against him. Men that are guilty of these things, *walk in the counsel of the ungodly*; sin with purpose and resolution; and so *stand in the way of sinners*; as the expression is, (*Psal. i. i.*) And this is such a state of life, as cannot consist with a state of Grace, for that time in which it is persisted in; nor can there be a recovery from the danger to which such a course exposes men, till they are very sorrowful for their past commissions, and actually forsake them for the time to come; and, having hope and faith, through the blood of Christ to obtain their pardon, they practise the vertues opposite to these vices. And of such an habitual state of sin the Apostle sayes, *We know that whosoever is born of God, sinneth not*, (*1 John 5. 18.*) And by this distinction, he supposes the children of God, to be manifested from the children of the Devil, (*Chap. 3. ver. 10.*) Nay, this wretched state is what usually

ally denominates men sinners in the Scripture. Now, he that thus *turneth away his ear from hearing Gods Law*; *i. e.* does not obey it; 'tis no wonder, that *his prayer is an abomination*, (Prov. 28. 9.). And how can any man reasonably expect, that God should so hear his prayers, as to grant supplies to his necessities, when, as an adversary to him, and an open declared enemy to Heaven, he thus confidently makes his addressees? When we wilfully reject Gods desires to us, how can we expect any thing less, than that he should deny those requests we make to him? But whatever observations some men may make, for ends, probably, not very good, where God may seem to grant the petitions of wicked men, either as a method (which they are ignorant of) to heap his judgments upon their heads, or as means to accomplish the designs of his providence, or in such things as tend to the support of humane nature, as they are men living in this world. Yet they cannot expect a gracious answer; or if they do, 'tis to no purpose, because vengeance will be mixed with the things he bestows; If (1.) They pray
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ex desiderio peccati, (as Schoolmen phrase it); or as the Apostle, with intention to consume what they receive upon the satisfaction of their lusts: For then they ask and receive not, because they ask amiss. And in such a sense, the sacrifice of the wicked must be abomination; and whatever they do, in order to such an end, is sin. (2.)

When wicked men pray without a previous and due humiliation of their minds, for those crimes which they are guilty of, and stand convicted for, in their own consciences, and at the tribunal of God; or without such a resolution to relinquish their sins as shall be brought to perfect effect in the process of their lives: when they do not smite on their breasts with the Publican; but either conceal their sins, as *David* did, sometime, his adultery and murder; or justify them with the Pharisees, and call evil good. *For he that covereth his sins shall not prosper; but whose confesseth and forsaketh them shall find mercy.* (Pro. 28. 13.) To pray to God with a full resolution to cherish those sins, which he so much hates, is to affront him to his very face; to spread our defiled garments before him, as if they were pure and clean;

clean ; or his eyes could now behold iniquity. This is like an accursed Traitor, when he comes to ask preferment of a King ; when he should beg pardon, with an halter about his neck ; To be like *Judas*, who betrayed our Saviour with a kiss ; and boldly to conclude that the innocence of our faces must incline God to a compliance with our sins. This is abominable in the sight of honest men, much more must it be odious in the sight of God ; unless, as some men strangely presume, it may be conjectured that he will overlook our crimes, as he is pleased to pass by our infirmities. Of this impenitent state may we understand that of *David* (*Psal.* 66. 18.) If I regard iniquity in mine heart, the Lord will not hear me ; and the prayers of such men are an abomination. Nay, God himself, who can neither ly, nor equivocate, says of such men, that they offer the multitude of their sacrifices to no purpose ; *i. e.* if they present them with an expectation of such an acceptance, as that the supream Being should be appeased by them. And in this sense is it, that he expostulates with the

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Jews, and forbids them to bring any more vain oblations, till they had washed and made themselves clean, and put away the evil of their doings from before his eyes; till they had ceased to do evil, and learned to do well. Otherwise (says he) incense is an abomination; the new Moons and Sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; It is iniquity, even the solemn meeting: *When ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you; yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear, your hands are full of blood.* (Isaiah 1.). (3.) Wicked men must not expect Gods favourable answer when they pray for such things, the concession of which may give too great and direct occasion for others to conclude, that God gives countenance to sin; whether it be lodged in the understanding, or the will, or in both. As for example; That such men may be enabled to work miracles, in confirmation of their errors, or to support their sinful and Diabolical designs. And therefore we find that when *Simon Magus* would have purchased the power of conferring the Holy Ghost upon his own Disciples; because this would have

have confirmed his devilish doctrines amongst the people, and that sacred gift and authority was too pure for his impious and defiled hands: S. Peter made a reply to him, as sharp and severe, as it was quick and sudden: *Thy money perish with thee, thou hast neither lot nor part in this matter; for thine heart is not right in the sight of God, (Acts 8. 20, 21.).* And this was the reason also of the saying of him that was born blind, *John 9. 31.) Now, we know, that God heareth not sinners.* For we find the Jews, (*ver. 24.*) exhorting the man to give God the glory of his cure; but none to our Saviour, by whose authority he was made whole, who had not sight restored, but given to him: *For we know, say they, (meaning Christ) that this man is a sinner, and therefore could have no authority to work such a Miracle.* To which the enlightened person replies thus, to confute their calumny, and at the same time to prove the authority of the Miracle, That he hath opened mine eyes is apparent; *Now we know that God heareth not sinners.* As if he should have said, God would not attend the petition of any that were a sinner

finer and impostor, as you suppose him to be, who has opened mine eyes, and given sight to me, to cause so great a Miracle to be done by him; because, such a thing would harden him in his vice, and confirm his imposture: And therefore, since God hears none, in such a case as this, but one that is a true worshipper of him, and does his will; it follows, *that you are mistaken in your thoughts of him: For if this man were not of God, he could have done nothing of this nature; nor gained such a power from above, as to have been able to open mine eyes, who was born blind.* But now, though God hears not the prayers of wicked men when they petition him in the fore-mentioned circumstances, or with a design to obtain the power of working Miracles: yet the case will be quite altered, when with a deep sense of their sins, and great humility of soul, they make their approaches with confession in their mouths, and a real resolution to forsake those sins that have hitherto separated betwixt their Maker and themselves: God is willing, then, to hearken to them; to adopt them into his family; to make them
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the objects of his care, and more especial providence; and to cause joy in Heaven for the sinner that repenteth. He calls to them, then, as he did to the Jews; *Come now, and let us reason together; Although your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wooll,* (Isa. i. 18.) God cherisheth the first beginnings of amendment; and he will neither *break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax*: But he encourageth the first motions to a return, accepts our sincerity, and quickens and crowns our faithful endeavours: And when, wicked men, in such circumstances of hopeful beginnings, address themselves to a gracious God, they will lose, by degrees, their former denomination; and quickly *have an Advocate with the Father, who is the propitiation for the sins of the whole world.* And having an interest in such a High Priest, who is the Bishop of the souls of men, they may *come boldly to the Throne of Grace, that they may obtain mercy, and find grace to help them in time of need,* (Heb. 4. 16.). When any men come to God with that humility of mind, in which the *Centurion* clothed,

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clothed, and addrest, himself to our Saviour, (Matth. 8. 8.) *Lord! I am unworthy that thou shouldst come under my roof*: they may then, whatever they have been before, piously expect, that, according to the reality of their faith, and the sincerity of their minds, it shall be done unto them. The Thief, upon the Cross, had no sooner said, *Lord remember me when thou comest into thy Kingdom*; but Christ, knowing the intention of his mind, which he now discovered, not only by his prayer, but also by the rebuke of his associate, presently replied, *To day thou shalt be with me in Paradise*, (Luke 23. 42, 43.) And why should any person fear, having good designs, and hearty intentions to amend his life, in addressing himself to such a God, whose compassions are infinite? When *Mary Magdalene* her self was admitted to his favour, out of whom went seven Devils, and to whom also much was forgiven: Nay, let Gods promise, however, become our encouragement; by no means for a continuance in our sins; (for Grace will not abound then:) but to admonish us to repent and pray. Especially, since he has declared,

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red, not only, that he keeps mercy for thousands: But more particularly, that when the wicked man turneth away from his wickedness that he hath committed, and doth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive, (Ezek. 18. 27.). Could any man be more vile than *Saul*, who persecuted Christianity even to the death, and was now struck blind with his Commission about him (which was an infallible testimony of his guilt, and an evidence beyond oral witness) to bring all the Christians, he could find, to *Jerusalem*, having first bound them, that they might receive their sentence? And yet, through the infinite mercy of God our Saviour, *Ananias* was sent miraculously to recover him, when once he humbled himself and prayed: *Enquire for Saul* (sayes our Lord in a Vision) *for, behold he prayeth*, (Acts 9. 11.). Certainly, therefore, none is so vile, but, if he has so real a resolution of amendment, that want of time only, in this mortal life, can hinder it from appearing in sincere action, he may address himself to Almighty God, and shall find grace to assist him in time of need.

C H A P. VIII.

THe last enquiry which I proposed to be made in relation to this great duty of prayer, is, to consider, whether it is necessary or no. And this would need no discourse at all, would men be contented with the determinations of the Gospel, and not mix Christianity with Philosophical disputes, and turn all publick places of meeting, into Schools of controversy, where every man determines out of the Chair, that was never in it. Christian Religion would be much more easie than it is, if men would look upon it as matter of fact, a thing that was once done and delivered by the great Messiah, who was authorized and came down from Heaven, to proclaim Gods Covenant of Grace to the world, sealed by the blood of the Mediator, and all conveyed down to us, in the way which is now recommended and practised in such

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Churches, as own the Scriptures to be their Rule of faith and manners, and impose nothing in the Circumstances and Ceremonies that attend Religion, but what is decent, in order, and for edification, and no where prohibited in the Word of God; no, nor yet the contrary enjoined and commanded; and therefore such cannot be sinful impositions, unless men, pretending to Christianity, can find a transgression where there is no Law. But however, because it has been a fashion, (to say nothing of design) to render easie things, by some mens perplexing them for their own advantage, difficult and hard: That I may not seem willing to avoid trouble; and because no other more necessary labour of a Minister is considered, than what is made publick by preaching, or writing, I am resolved at this time, being in a complying humour, neither to balk the questions of Knaves, nor the scruples of Fools. The strong foundation upon which this enquiry is built, is upon the notion of Gods Decrees; and, in pursuance of these, his Providence over the world, and therefore what necessity is there of prayer, since it cannot alter Gods Decrees, and,

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in consequence of it, the actions of his Providence? But is it not strange, that some men should raise doubts concerning that which nature it self has seem'd to dictate, and is one of the principles of mankind? What if we meet with some few Sceptical Disputants, who love to hear themselves talk; and because their spirits are determined to their tongues, and too well love their lodging there, having left few in their brains to direct and guide them, are mightily pleased with their volubility of language, and the venting their passions, without any dictates from the conclusions of their retired minds, but make their affections Clowns to their understandings, whilst they pass by without any ceremony or consideration? Yet I am resolved to prove prayer to be necessary, in spite of all Atheists and Fanaticks, if they will attend to reason, or but consult their own systems. He that denies the Being of a God, let him shew the reason of the common and periodical revolutions of things; or how he himself came into the world; and the original of those powers by which he manages such an argument. And if he cannot

deny that God is, the whole world will hiss at him, if he will not grant, that he ought to be invoked, and prayed to. And as for those, who allow prayer in the practice, but yet, destroy the reason of it, by their principles, and grow distracted by their belief in God, losing his Attributes, whilst they retain his Name; I must principally discourse with such men under this enquiry. And, that I may obtain leave with others in the world, that make some figure among mankind, to beat the bush before any thing is started; give me leave to acquaint you, that 'tis a common division of that worship which we owe to God, into a Moral, and Ceremonial, part. Moral, is that, by which we pay our duty to him, according to his Moral Precepts and Commands implanted in our natures, or otherwise sufficiently revealed, submitting to his will in his daily providence. Ceremonial, is a due observance of those Rites and circumstances that justly tend to the promotion of the Moral parts of worship. Now, though this latter be the controversie of our Countrey, and those times in which we live; though debates and

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objections concerning this, are the sparks, that set whole houses on fire, lay Cities waste, and make their Inhabitants prey upon each other; and like thorns, crackle under the Pots of some, who would be accounted little less than Prophets, when having laid, they foretell, their own designs, and by lucky hits bring them to pass. Yet, since the first is not without its difficulties, suitable to the variation of the fancies, judgements, or interest of men; who, according to their pleasure, or the admiration of others, make things either hard or soft, difficult or easie, when it is their will to obscure or explain them. Before I proceed any farther on the particular subject under consideration, it may not be amiss, to be instructed in its preparatives, and general ingredients, as it is a part of Moral Worship, in which is included that which is Natural. To compleat which, there must (1.) Be a serious consideration of the works of God, which sufficiently declare his Being to the world. (2.) A right judgement upon, and collection from, them. (3.) A rational and suitable affection of mind, proportionable to our reason.

nable inferences, and deductions. And, Lastly, a constant demonstration of this affection throughout the whole course of our lives; especially in our confessions, prayers and thanksgivings to God.

First, Then do we justly contemplate the works of God, when we make diligent search into them, and fix our minds upon the excellency of their nature, and orderly disposal for use and ornament. When we consider both the Heavens and the Earth; and more particularly reflect upon our selves, (as *David* did), and see how fearfully and wonderfully we are made; that from hence we may infer the wisdom, goodness, and power of God. (2.) Then do we perform the next thing preparative to prayer, and adoration, when, upon the intellectual view of any of Gods works of Creation, or Providence, we own and acknowledge his glorious Attributes thus rendred apparent to us, because there are sufficient footsteps of these in the works of his hands. *Thus the heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth his handy work: Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge,* (Psal.

19. 1, 2.) And the invisible things of him (sayes St. Paul) are clearly seen from the Creation of the World, being understood by *the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead,* (Rom. 1. 20. (3.) We ascend another step of moral service, when, by due consideration, we act with understanding and judgment upon the works of God; inferring from thence his glorious Attributes; and, upon the contemplation and view, we are properly and truly affected with them, as things that mark out a most excellent Being. This affection will appear in our admiration, love, and awful regard to him; in our humility of mind, and dependance on him; in our rejoicing and confiding in him; and the like acts of rational creatures, towards their great and Sovereign Creator. And therefore, (Lastly,) we must give all possible testimony of these affections throughout the whole course of our lives, by adoring him whom we have cause to fear; by invoking him on whom we depend; by giving thanks to him who is our great Benefactor; by continual calling on his power for aid, and praying his goodness to relieve us

in our necessities; and by a constant obedience to him who is our King, and most Supreme Governour. Now though none, almost, who is endowed with any reason and understanding, can refuse, from the prospect of this, to conclude prayer to be both necessary and advantageous; Yet the Disputers of this World, especially when they like not the man that writes it, will not be so easily satisfied. For, (1.) Some have conjectured things to come to pass by chance and fortune, denying Gods Government of the World by Providence. (2.) Others have introduced a Stoical fatality, concluding all things to be necessary, banishing what we call contingency. Now whether this is said to come to pass by the concatenation of second Causes, by the fatality of Stars, or by reason of absolute and irrefractive Decrees; This Principle, like the former, takes away the great reason of prayer, as it regards the procuring benefits to our selves; and renders our petitions useless, and in vain, if God be inexorable, and has so tied himself up by his own Decrees, that he will not be intreated by the most profound and sincere devotions, nor the most affectionate,

nate, humble and hearty prayers of men, whom he has yet commanded to petition him. Oh! what a strange being do some men make him? This supposes him to be so unlike to the great Maker and Governor of the Universe, that a man, of but a tolerable nature and ingenuity, would be ashamed of such a description of himself. Now though it might be a sufficient answer to Objections raised from such absurd and ridiculous principles, to expose the propositions upon which such inferences are built. Yet, because it would too much swell this Discourse; I shall rather do it, with reference unto prayer, by this more short and ready Method. (1.) By shewing that, notwithstanding all his dark, and most secret, Decrees, God has promised to hear and grant mens lawful petitions. (2.) That he has done so even when he had seemed to determine things opposite to what they asked. And (3.) by giving some reasons for this Duty of prayer, which will determine the point, how great soever the Objections against it may appear to be.

First, God has promised to hear and grant mens lawful petitions. *Offer to*
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God thanksgiving, and pay thy vows unto the most high ; And call upon me (says God) in the day of trouble ; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorifie me, (Psal. 50. 14, 15.). When Solomon had finished that glorious Temple, devoutly dedicated to the honour of God ; the great Jehovah signified to him the acceptance both of his prayer, and dedication , together with the wise choice of that place for an house of Sacrifice ; And then he makes this solemn promise ; *If I shut up heaven that there be no rain ; or if I command the locusts to devour the land ; or if I send a pestilence among my people : If my people, upon whom my name is called, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways ; Then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land : And mine eyes shall be open, and mine ears attent unto the prayer that is made in this place, (2 Chron. 7th Chap. 13, 14, 15.).* And if any one should unreasonably think that such promises only concerned the *Jews*, when the thing, which it is quoted to prove, is equally, as to the main substance, a duty and an encouragement to the *Christians* ; let him quit the Old Testament
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in point of Controversie ; and we will presently make use only of the New. But then some Jesuited Protestants might many times lose their Cause, if they had not Prophecies to retire to in the dark ; and would have nothing but the Book of the *Revelation* to guide them. Yet however, let us peruse the New Testament ; and the promises, in this case, will appear more large and comprehensive ; *where we have the blood of Sprinkling, speaking better things than the blood of Abel* ; that pleads strongly for the acceptance of Christians lawful petitions ; *where we have the Mediator of a better Covenant, who continually appears in the presence of God, presenting both his sufferings and his triumphs, and, in virtue of his Sacrifice upon the Cross, now liveth to make intercession for us* ; and therefore our prayers, through his hands ascend as incense, when we offer our Spiritual Sacrifices by him, our Intercessor does sufficiently consecrate them, *in whose name we are exhorted to come boldly to the Throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help us in time of need, (Heb. 4. 16.)* Nay, our blessed Saviour himself encourages all his Disciple to make their petitions
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to Almighty God. *Ask (says he) and it shall be given you, seek and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: For every one that asketh receiveth, and he that seeketh findeth, and to him that knocketh it shall be opened, (Matth. 7. 7, 8.)* Furthermore, he confirms this by the addition of a promise to use his utmost interest in it, and his Mediatorry authority to bestow what we lawfully pray for; And certainly, in this state of Christianity, we may fully depend upon his Intercession and ability; *Because all power is given to him, both in heaven and in earth.* See therefore what he engages for, (*John 14. 13, 14.*) *Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do; and doubles the promise for the greater assurance to his Disciples: Nay, not only so, but repeats it with a double asseveration; Verily, verily, I say unto you whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you, (Joh. 16. 23, 24, and 27.)* Our Saviour was so careful to prevent, or scatter, all those fears that, like a Cloud, hung over his Disciples heads, upon the apprehensions they might have of his departure from them, that he does not only promise to send the Comforter to them, but

but assures them, upon the word of truth, that when in any straits and exigencies of affairs, they should, through him, make their addressee unto God, they should have ready audience, and a quick return made to their prayers.

And therefore he bids them ask and they shall receive, that their joy might be full; and gives a sufficient argument to encourage them to petition, and emboldens their faith and hope in their prayers; because the Father himself has a great kindness for all those who evidence their affection to the Son of his bosom, and the delight of his soul. *So that sooner shall the earth be dissolved, and the heavens melt,* than such promises, so powerfully confirmed, fail of their accomplishment; nor can any man possibly distrust them, when he is himself, that concludes God to be faithful, and immutable, and does not think our Saviour Christ to be the greatest Impostor in the World. (2.) God has heard mens prayers for such things as they have asked, even when he had seemed to have determined beforehand what was contrary to the end of their petitions. And therefore, although he knows our wants before we utter and
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make them publick by open addressees ; yet as his command for prayer and promises of audience takes off that Objection : So if his determinations have, *de facto*, been altered upon mens devout prayers, and humble supplications, it doth not only prove some Decrees conditional ; but sufficiently baffles all discouragements to prayer which we may receive from any uncouth and absurd Doctrines of men concerning absolute and irrespective determinations, with reference to the beings here on Earth ; which, in their consequence, render prayers useles, and justifie what they call persecution ; since, in my opinion, they should follow, or at least submit to, Providence, (if they state it right) as well in, what the vulgar call, misfortunes, as they pretended to do, in their glories, and in their triumphs. But, though Gods Providence is over all his works, and like a wise Governour, he superintends the World : Yet since secret things belong unto him, and only revealed to us, and to our children ; His apparent commands are to be the rules for our practice, and not his obscure and hidden Decrees ; which mystical, and pretending, persons, who confidently

ly assume the monopoly of Dreams, would fain have authority to soothsay upon ; that they may not appear to be ignorant in that which no man can know ; and yet these would willingly, when it might be propitious to their designs, resolve all their villany into them. But what a strange confusion would be introduced into the World (although sincerity did attend opinion) if Subjects should proportion their actions of life according to the uncertain conjectures they have of the intentions and designs of their Prince, and not guide themselves by his known Laws ? The Laws would, then, no longer be his, but their own ; and upon an uncertain, though frightful, prevision, they would rebel either by nature or instinct, and wipe their mouths whilst they gravely make Providence their Leader. Such would our deportment be towards God, should we measure our Duties by Gods Decrees, which we could never know ; and leave his written Laws manifested in his word, by which he has declared his will to men. And certainly men who make Providence to be their conductor in these affairs ; though
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they have been in earnest, yet, now, are but in jest with us; since it seems but to serve their turn at such a time, in which they say they groan under, and cry out on, persecution from those, who, having gained the whip hand, exercise it very gently upon them; nor would I have it (were it in my power) too severe upon the backs of any; nor any ways intolerable on the Masters of Assemblies. And truly, I know not but it might be born with a little patience, though they should be compell'd to take Country air to preserve their own health, when they make others sick in the Town by staying. But however it fares with particular contrivers, that follow Providence, whilst it comports with their own interest; yet certainly, whatever may be the mystical conclusions of any Enthusiastical men, whose fancy may blow them up to the conceipt, and, for ought some others know, to the very sense of an Inspiration; Providence, which was always dark and full of riddles, was never designed as a Rule to mens lives; because from this are frequently deduced opposite, and quite contrary conclusions. Alas! men (who, when blown up like a bladder,

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are no more, though when broken they may make a louder crack) cannot see through the Clouds of Heaven, nor discern the Council of the adorable Trinity, nor read the Decrees, or Records above, that accordingly they may act here on Earth. Mortal men in this variable state below, are to confine themselves *to the Law, and to the Testimony*; and if any speak not according to this word, (whatever illuminations they may pretend) *it is because there is no light within them*, (Isai. 8. 20.) And, verily, there is no cause to doubt (if our Maker be a God of truth, and designed not to impose upon the World) but that I may affirm, without any dangerous opposition, that his secret will does not contradict his revealed, notwithstanding the boldness and impiety of the distinction, as it is made use of in Gods dealing with men; or as the Symbol and infallible test of one party renouncing all Symbolical Ceremonies. Having thus too largely prefaced that which I promised to prove: (which I strived to check my Pen in; but my understanding would dictate to my will, and both must unavoidably guide my hand). I come now to give some in-

stances where prayer has prevailed with God to grant petitions, when yet he had seemed to have determined things contrary to the sense of them. And I shall not fetch too large a compass, but name a few. The first shall be the case of the *Israelites*; when, in the absence of *Moses* on the Mount, beyond their expectation, they had caused a molten Calf to be made, and had offered burnt, and peace-offerings before it, and devoted this prophane institution of theirs by a solemn Festival; God was so enraged at this abomination, that he did not only abhor the service, but declared in wrath, that they had corrupted themselves, and that they were a stiff-necked people: Nay, he forbade *Moses* to intercede for them, that he might render them as great an example of his fury, as he had before of his mercy, and his Miracles. Now, therefore, let me alone (saies God to *Moses*,) that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them: And yet, upon the intercession of *Moses*, the text declares, that the Lord repented him of the evil which he thought to do unto his people, (Exod. 32. 14.). Again, when they were discontented, and murmu-

red at the report made to them of the Promised Land, and, for these signals of their disobedience, the great God threatened to *smite them with the Pestilence*, and to disinherit them of that favour, and Land together, which he had before given them a title to; Yet, upon *Moses's* intercession and prayer, in their behalf, when he beseeched God to *pardon the iniquity of the people, according to the greatness of his mercy*; He returned to him this gracious answer; *I have pardoned according to thy word*, (Numb. 14-20.). And, indeed, to give those frequent instances of this people, obtaining mercy by prayer, even when God had declared his determination to punish, would be to follow them from their Cradle to their Grave: For as he loved *Israel* when it was a child, so his affection continued as they grew up, and his mercy followed them to their old age: And though their sinful obstinacy, when there was no hope of recovery left, after various methods in which their safety was attempted, caused God to abate his favours by degrees; Yet, it was not totally withdrawn, till he was forced to *lay his ax to the root of the tree, and to*

cut it down for cumbring the ground ; to cause a calamitous dispersion of them, and put a final period to their State and Government. So that to instance in all their deliverances, and frequent preservations obtained by prayer, would be to write an History of the *Jews*, and to transcribe, almost, all their Annals. They sin'd, very often, in the midst of Miracles ; and, yet, upon their repentance and prayer, the grace of God as often pardoned them ; and he revok'd his Sentence, even when it was pass'd, and gone forth against them. So that this people was not a greater and more lasting Monument of his vast and incomprehensible Power, than they were examples of his forbearance, and long suffering ; being rendered objects of his infinite mercy, and as large an instance of the prevalency of prayer, as they were of his protection and compassion. But, a second example, and proof too, of Gods being prevailed upon by prayer, to revoke a Sentence when it was decreed and published, shall be an instance in *Hezekiah*, (2 Kings, 20th Chap.). When this King was sick, and God had sent the Prophet *Isaiah* to him, to declare that
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startling and fatal Sentence ; *Set thine house in order , for thou shalt die and not live.* He presently turned himself to the wall, and mixing tears with his affectionate prayer, beseeched God to revoke his Decree, and rescind his resolution : And such was the prevalence of his sincere desire, that his petitions were not only heard, but answered too ; his tears, being not those of an hypocritical Crocodile weeping over a prey which he intended to devour, were quickly wiped off from his cheeks ; and a grant from Heaven , beyond any reasonable expectation, exchanged his mourning for joy and gladness, *and added fifteen years to his life* ; and, in order to his enjoyment of them, he was directed, from above, to the use of those things here below, that might infallibly, when God himself was pleased to assist, be the means of his Cure. And, to comfort him in the interval, he gave him a miraculous sign of the accomplishment, that he might have some present ease and satisfaction. The last instance, to prove this point, which now has fallen under consideration , shall be that of *Nineve* : For when God had pronounced

his Sentence against that people, and commanded *Jonah* the Prophet, to proclaim it; which denunciation was very precise; *That at the end of forty daies, Niniveh should be destroyed*: Yet, as soon as there was a Fast proclaimed, and the Citizens had clothed themselves with Sackcloth as a publick testimony, and significant ceremony of their guilt and sorrow, and resolution of amendment, and cried mightily unto God in prayer, attended by a solemn repentance: The Text declares, *that he saw their works, and repented of the evil which he said he would do unto them, and did it not,* (*Jonah 3. 10.*) And till these, and such like, examples are blotted out of the Sacred Records, we have no reason to forbear our prayers upon any notion of Gods Decrees, or from any Sceptical or perverse conclusions which any of the high flown wits of men may draw from an unalterable Providence; the particular paths of which are past our finding out; because, being not sufficiently declared to us, they are, like the secrets of Princes, kept privately, (without which, confusion would presently mix with their Government) and lock'd up in a close Cabinet; and therefore we

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cannot draw conclusions when we are ignorant of the premisses, from whence our inferences should be made. Providence will certainly be too obscure, (unless that which is steady and universal, uniform, and, in all revolutions, still the same) for us to draw certain and infallible rules from, to conduct us in the duties and affairs of this life. And yet we may, and ought too, after the acts of Providence are rendred visible, to make some reflections, as it relates to our selves; though we ought to be extremely cautious how we pass Censures upon others, from the consideration of Gods Providence towards them; because if we are too bold in that, we do not only give too great an evidence of a very partial and ill nature; but we shall often acquit the guilty, whilst we pass Sentence upon the innocent, and condemn the generation of Gods children. It may be lawful, in the general, to read our sins by our own particular temporal punishments; nay, the kind of sin we have been guilty of, which has provoked God to be severe against us, when the sin is manifest in the misery, which is the consequent of it.

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But this cannot be managed by every man; Because it requires a large observation; great and deep thoughtfulness of heart, attended with very much caution, and prudence. Yet, when any dismal, or adverse, affliction happens to betide us, we cannot offend: But we must be industrious, in searching out our waies, and turning to the Lord our God; and it ought to cause some humiliation in our own minds, though, all this while, the Providence of God may wisely design it for our advantage. But nothing of this nature can reasonably give a check to our devotion; or be an argument against invoking the Deity. Especially, if (in the last place) we consider, that, notwithstanding all Objections, there are sufficient reasons to determine us in this point, and fix prayer as a duty upon us. For (1.), Admitting, that all things were predetermined by their Creator, not only in the general, but in particular too; in what order they should be in the world; what regard they should bear to each other; nay, the minutest circumstances of persons, and things: Yet since all must be accomplished by a wise and powerful application

plication of actives, to passives ; by invigorating Causes, to produce their effects, or, withdrawing their force ; Or, by new mixtures, altering their nature, as may best comport with the particular ends of the Eternal Decree : Since it is most certain that means are used, by the Supreme Governour, to bring about the designs of his Providence ; who knows, but prayer may be one ? Especially, since it infallibly operates upon the minds of men, beyond any rhetorical exhortation in the world, to cause them to change evil resolutions, and to submit to the conduct of the most wise Being ; Although it could not incline him to alter any Decree that is gone out of his mouth, nor break any link in the fixed, and determined, chain of Providence. Nay, we may with great reason conclude it to be so ; when, (2.) We consider, that we are commanded to pray by God himself, whose infinite wisdom never designed such great solemnity to no purpose ; nor can he only appoint it in honour to himself, when he has declared, that it shall be beneficial unto us : How can we otherwise understand St. *James* (Chap. 5. 13.) ? *Is*
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any among you afflicted? Let him pray. Is any man sick among you? Let him call for the Elders of the Church, and let them pray over him; and the prayer of faith shall save the sick. St. Paul had petitioned to no purpose, when Sathan stir'd up some potent lust, in his own flesh, or the malice of his severe adversaries, to buffet him, if prayer had not been a means to convey relief to him; and yet we find him thrice interceding, in his own behalf, for the removal of this afflicting evil, (2 Cor. 12. 8.). And, though he might not obtain the particular thing which he prayed for; yet instead of that, he gained grace, and strength, to support him in his misery, and, in the end, to triumph over his infirmities, and snares. But what matter is it, how great and formidable Objections are, by which carnal and indevout men quarrel, that which they find to be a duty inconsistent with their loose and ungodly temper? As long as we find the generality of mankind, to have endeavoured, from a natural instinct, to appease the Deity, and render God propitious to them: As long as any outward Revelation has been legible to the World, we find
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prayer an ingredient in mens worship : It was the practice both of *Jews*, and *Gentiles*, commanded both by *Moses*, and *Christ*. What should we then regard fallacious and ill-grounded arguments for, against so solemn and universal a duty ? When our Saviour himself has taught us to pray, and promised that we shall receive what we ask for, if we ask not amiss : when we read those precepts of the inspired, and blessed, Apostle *St. Paul* ; *Pray without ceasing ; continue instant in prayer*, and the like ; when we know that the Apostles, and Primitive Christians, were constant and zealous in their prayers ; and from them it has been derived downwards, as a duty to us, through all the intermediate Ages of the Church. Nay, unless, Finally, we could prove that Sacred Text to be *Apocryphal*, (*Phil. 4. 6.*) ; *In every thing, by prayer, and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God.* And, who would willingly, if it were in his power, cancel such a duty, which, besides the inward satisfaction men conversant in it, receive in the performance, being devoutly and orderly acted towards God, through

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through the merits of our Saviour, it obtains Temporal, Spiritual, and Eternal blessings? *Elijah* prayed for rain in a time of drought, and the Heavens, quickly relenting, wept. (*1 Kings, 18th Chap.*). *Hannah* petitioned God for a Son, and then brought forth *Samuel*. *For this child* (says she) *I prayed, and the Lord gave me my petition that I asked of him,* (*1 Sam. 1. 27.*). *Ephraim* bemoaned himself, and prayed that he might be converted from the error of his ways; and God soon granted the request: *For I will surely have mercy on him, saith, the Lord,* (*Jer. 31. 20.*). So reasonable is that exhortation of Saint *James*, (*Chap. 1. 5.*); *If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask it of God, who giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him.* *David* at once acknowledged his sin, and beg'd pardon; and God forgave him the iniquity of his sin, (*Psal. 32. 5.*). And, therefore, he most justly infer'd a conclusion from it, to incourage others to this Sacred duty: *For this* (says he) *shall every one that is godly pray unto God, in a time when he may be found.* Lastly, we find the Thief upon the Cross, by his short prayer, obtaining this answer; *verily* (says our

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our Saviour) *I declare to thee, that to day thou shalt be with me in Paradise,* (Luke 23. 43.). So that supposing that there were no certainty, in this case, by which we might determine our duty, (as plainly there is): Yet when two probabilities appear, 'tis most rational to make our choice, in things where one must become our Option, according to the weight of Arguments, to incline us. And if this be a fair and equal standard, we cannot possibly neglect, or recede from the duty of prayer; since the objections against it (if they could not otherwise be solved) are neither proportionate for weight, or number, to the reasons which have been urged for prayer. Especially if, (3.) We consider that in this we offer a resignation of our selves, and all our concerns, to the God that made us; that prayer causes us to put a guard upon our selves, by our discovery of those weaknesses and breaches, which the enemy of mankind, or age in sinning, or want of repairs by vertue and Religion, have made and enlarged upon us; and in this we also discern, as in a glass, the common infirmities of our own natures, and how accidents in the world, betray

betray us into misfortunes ; against all which we pray for aid, and petition for relief. And thus it becomes an excellent mean to cause us, *to order our conversation aright, that we may, at last, see the Salvation of God.* Nay, some men (though I know not well upon what certain foundation) build the great use and advantage of prayer upon this thing : But by this they pass it into an exhortation only, and seem as it were to transubstantiate it ; and abate not only from the use of it, as distinguished from all other duties, that convey knowledge, and raise affection ; but from the advantages we receive by it. One observes this difference, betwixt Human and Divine Prayer : ‘ That prayer, among men, is supposed to be a mean to change the person to whom we pray : But prayer to God does not change him ; but only fits us for receiving the things prayed for. Yet this cannot possibly be wholsom Doctrine, unless we allow it some grains of salt, by distinguishing betwixt Gods Essence, and his Will ; his Essence, indeed, cannot be changed by our prayers ; but his Will may. Again, before the former Assertion can be accounted true ,

true, Gods Decrees must be distinguished into absolute, and conditional ; His absolute Decrees cannot be altered, but his conditional may, as I have proved before. However, we must conclude that one end of prayer, (and therefore one design of Gods commanding it, though this cannot be all) next to a profession of our dependance on him, and that natural subjection we owe to him, seems to be the influence it has upon our selves, to produce the growth and actions of piety and vertue, and the purifying our Souls, and Bodies too, for the reception of those favours for which we make our humble petitions. And when we shall , with some thoughtfulness, consider what a direct influence our prayers have, to the accomplishing such glorious designs ; we cannot deny even this argument, to conclude our duty. For how effectually do our prayers move us to those vertues for the accomplishment of which we implore Gods grace and assistance, if we are at all hearty in our addresses ? And how directly do they check those vices which we both lament a former, and pray against a future, commission of ? Our confessions
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bring our sins to remembrance, and those expressions by which we aggravate them with truth, cause us to abominate those miscarriages which we thus, with horror, most dreadfully decipher. Our petitions mind us of our own infirmities, and the person from whom we obtain relief ; and our very thanksgivings for blessings received impress our minds with a sense of his goodness, and power, *from whom comes every good and perfect gift.* And the frequent repetitions of such a duty, cannot but inform us of our great obligations to so good a benefactor ; fill our hearts with awe and reverence, and cause returns, in the obedience of our lives, to him, on whom we are made sensible of such a large dependance, and from whom, as often as we say our prayers, we acknowledge to have renewed obligations. So that were this great and solemn duty of prayer, frequently practised, with due humility and intention of mind ; it would be impossible for men to act those sins with industry and delight, which they do, and must, confess with sorrow, and beg the pardon of with seriousness, and repentance. And I may, with confidence,

dence, give men assurance, that if they would more frequently pray, they would sin less; and the rational and humble management of their addresses to Almighty God would have great influence upon their dispositions and actions, far beyond what those can expect, by another method, who do not frequently, and seriously adventure the experiment. For as, according to *Plato's* Philosophy, the Sovereign good and welfare of the Soul, is the possession of the likeness of God; when the mind, having the knowledge of him, is transformed into him: So by often admiring, and adoring his Attributes, we earnestly desire that which we adore, and endeavour to resemble what we admire; it being natural to rational men to imitate, in themselves, that which they commend and praise in another. Now this Image of God, which, in us, consists in the habitual possession of his most glorious, and, as far as they are capable of being called communicable, perfections, is that which best distinguishes us from beasts; and our souls themselves, when they are immers'd in matter, and converse only with sensual objects, do as it were

lose their nature, and tincture themselves by their conversation ; and so much the less rational they become, by how much the less they are virtuous, and religious. And therefore *Grillus*, in *Plutarch*, (*Phæd.*), reasons, and asserts well, when he affirms, that if Religion be once taken from men, they are not only nothing better than Brutes, but more miserable ; For that being subject to many evils, their troubles are accented, and their disquietments enlarged beyond the perception of other Creatures, of a meaner and more insensible nature. 'Tis Religion, therefore, that perfects and consummates the beings of men ; that causes them to aspire to Glory, through all the crosses and afflictions of this world, and prepares them for an endless immortality ; And, in this, it renders them far superior to the lower Brutes, who live some time, and then die, and perish. Now such being the fruits which grow with, and are born upon, our prayers, to which Religion has so natural a tendency, that, whenever it is genuine, and sincere, 'tis blessed with the production of such a glorious offspring ; and prayer, and devotion rising up at last
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into the possession of eternal life ; this consideration cannot but convince us that prayer is both our privilege, and our duty , if we either regard God , or our selves , the honour of our Maker, or our uninterrupted and eternal wellfare. The great God , has appointed prayer to be the means, through the intercession of our Saviour, to procure to us Grace here , and Glory hereafter ; and we invert the methods of Divine Providence, when we expect the conveyance in another way. For though he that is Omniscient, knows our wants, and what is not present to make us happy ; Although he is acquainted with his own resolutions, nor can we prescribe methods to him, or with modest devotion, desire more than he has promised, and intends to grant ; Yet in prayers, directed by his most holy word, he commands us to ask, in order to our obtainment of what he vouchsafes to give ; nor will he be inclined to bestow his blessings without the signification of our desires. *Vult Deus rogari, vult cogi, vult quâdam importunitate vinci,* (says St. Austin) *bona est hæc violentia, &c.* God will be intreated,

he will be compell'd, he will be overcome by a certain importunity ; this is a good violence, when, in prayer, we wrestle with Almighty God, and like *Jacob, we will not let him go, till he has left his blessing behind him.* He loves, in our devotions, that we should thus, with due humility, importune him, with demonstration of kindness, and affection, at the same time, when, without fainting, we express our wants ; He will neither withhold grace, nor glory, nor any other good thing from these. And, certainly, if prayer be necessary to obtain such things, without which we must be miserable, both in this world, and in that which is to come ; I have sufficiently evidenced prayer to be a duty incumbent upon all, who resolve not to renounce their own happiness, by missing those graces that are both gained, and exercised in it ; who love communion with God here, respect their eternal glory hereafter, and are not so regardless of themselves, as for ever to abandon the means ordained for their own preservation.

C H A P. IX.

THat I may now draw to a conclusion of this Discourse, I think I may justly infer from the whole, these three Propositions ; the exemplifying of which, I shall be as brief in as I may, at least, as short as may comport with the bad times in which we live. (1.) That the Prayers, and Service of our own Church (*The Church of England, Established by the known Laws of the Land*) are composed and performed in such a manner, that God will accept them. (2.) That the Church of *Rome* offend him with theirs, and is most irrationally, and abominably peccant in their devotions. And, (3.) That they who live amongst us, and yet strangely separate from us, under the shelter, and pretence, of greater Reformation, and a more pure Evangelical Worship, do not perform their services unto God in such a manner as is suitable to his Attributes, and Worship,

mans dependance, and that infinite distance betwixt their Creator, and themselves. And so upon the whole, it must appear to be an unreasonable service.

First, it may be plainly infer'd, That the Church of *England*, embodied with the State, allowed, and strengthened by civil Sanctions, worships God in such a manner as he accepts; and offers him such a Spiritual Sacrifice, with which he is well pleased; that can no way be frustrated of its excellent design, but by a neglect in the devotionists, or, the bad lives of those, who pretend thusto worship. This will appear, (though not only) from that which our Adversaries are pleased, sometimes, to call a Club Argument; because it is Established by a Royal Christian Assent in Parliament; And yet this, as it makes for the interest of those who contend with us, becomes Sacred; though at other times, when the advice of Parliaments, with their own consent, is by the King pass'd into a Law; if it contradicts either their Principles, or their Humour, (and 'tis difficult to guess, which is the Commander) it shall be judged hard, or sanguinary, or, not agreeing

greeting with that liberty, *in which Christ has made us free* ; and a Text, uttered at first, upon a very far different account, shall be as frequently urged, as it has been answered ; *We ought to obey God rather than men.* So that such persons, are extremely for Government according to Law, when this allows, or indulges their Principles, and their Practice ; but conclude it to be unequal, and unjust, when the same Laws condemn, and punish them ; and they seem to be like a noble Traitor accused, and now going to his Trial, who walks in state, and, seemingly, with an unconcerned mind, nay, many times, with joy, and briskness in his countenance, when the back of the Ax is turned towards him ; but when, as he comes back again, the edge of the fatal instrument of death looks upon him, his face is demure, he treads the earth with trembling steps, and wishes there had been no Law to condemn him ; and if he has any sprightliness in his looks, his end is only by this significant ceremony, to persuade the people, that he remains innocent, and that the Law is hard, by which he is condemned, though, perhaps, before, when

when it served his turn, and promotion too, nothing was like Government according to Law. But to leave this Argument, because it may grieve some persons, whose principles and zeal are managed suitable to their Secular interest, although, I fear, it must be the effectual reason at last to convince them: Let us enquire, whether the Prayers, and Worship, of the Church of *England*, are not to be justified another way? This being a publick Worship of Christians Embodied, and Constituting the Sacred Society of a Church, who, with unity of hearts, and a suitable uniformity, meet together in a place devoted to the service of God, and separated from vulgar, and profane uses; the prayers, and service, must be allowed, by reasonable persons, to be such as it ought to be, uttered in such general expressions as all may be able to consent unto, and say *Amen* at the close and period. And where confessions, prayers, and thanksgivings, are more precisely and particularly managed, and he, who is the mouth of the Congregation, invents his own unallowed prayers, and pretends to utter the concerns of all, though some may be able to joyn in one part, and

and some in another, yet, 'tis very seldom, that any one can consent to all ; and all perhaps, had they time to consider, could not give their assent to one period, besides those that tell God his own ; or some general things which are usually declared, before he comes to what are called soul-searching particulars. I have heard of a *Quaker*, who, vouchsafing to hear one that was not of his own persuasion, and finding that the man who pray'd *extempore*, had laid a great heap of Confessions before him, and had been very curious in sorting sins into their several kinds and degrees, and uttering all in the name of the Congregation ; he presently, as if he had been used to chop Logick, makes his inference in this Dilemma : Either this man tells lies, or this people are very wicked, and resolved to have no more to do with them. But another, perhaps, more severe than he, may think his conclusion very reasonable, when he supposes, and infers that the man prays from his own experience, and from his particular defects, attributes the same to all mankind, and causes a multitude to be partakers of his private sins, to petition
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what he only wants, and to give thanks for the benefits which he has received. And, perhaps, upon the consideration of all, the mouth of the people may at last be thought the worst member among them all, whatever his headship may yet signifie. But not to confound Closets with Churches, nor yet to grant, that a single man can hold a great Congregation in his belly: Let us take a prospect of our own Church, and see whether we can justifie that, without finding faults in others. In this we offer up to God all those desires of our minds, that are fit for men embodied into a Christian Society, and who are partakers of the same Communion: We confess the general heads of sin, of which all being guilty, they can from a short reflection upon themselves, truly acknowledge that they have been sharers in; And if it should be rendered more particular, some only might be guilty, and so there would be a Schism in our acknowledgements, because all could not give their assent, without telling a lie to their Maker, and supposing themselves more vile than they are; And moreover this way of publick Worship would expose all
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the professors of Christianity, to the contempt of those that are enemies to Religion; at least adversaries to that of the Gospel. We have also, in the Service, which the Church of *England* owns, upon our Confession, Gods free pardon declared to us, in that manner, as Christ himself has appointed in his Gospel, without such an Auricular confession as may give us Knowledge of the Secrets of Princes, and administer occasion to disturb the Order, and Government of the World; Which they, indeed, ought to introduce, who undertake to be so particular, and nice, in confessing the sins of other men, or, praying for the things, individuals stand in need of. But to proceed; By our absolutions, the true penitent is only encouraged; and that authority, which our Saviour left, with his last Commission, to the Ministers of his Gospel, is kept up, and maintained, in pursuance of what Christ said to his Apostles, after his Resurrection, when the state of his humiliation ceased, and he was ready to ascend with triumph to his Father, (*Joh. 20. 23.*): *Whose sins ye remit, they are remitted; and whose sins ye retain, they are retained.* Furthermore,

more, we are directed, by the Order of our Church, to say our prayers day by day ; that, so, we may, in the sense of the Apostle, *pray without ceasing* ; and *continue instant in prayer* ; and, by *virtue of our adoption, cry Abba Father* ; And this, because the prescription of our blessed Lord himself, gives us both a pattern, and direction for, when he teaches us *to pray for bread*, (which is the staff and support of our lives) day, by day. As to the object of our prayers, we make our Supplications to God alone, through the Merits, and mediation of Jesus Christ ; and admit no creature to partake in the honour due to either. The matter of our publick prayers is such, as includes our general wants ; we always beg the pardon of sin ; to be delivered from temptations and evils ; we petition also for Grace to assist us, it being the influence of the Spirit of God : And, in particular, we ask those Theological virtues of Faith, Hope, and Charity, without which we cannot be saved. We pray more especially, (as the Ancients did, even when they were persecuted) *for Kings, and all that are in authority ; that under them we may lead godly and quiet lives* :
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Nay, we petition for men of all sorts, and in all circumstances, that none may be shut out from the benefit of our prayers; and we beg all things that may be needful for our bodies, and our souls. We pray for happy seasons of the year; for prevention of, and deliverance from, all Plagues that may hurt the body, and all evils that may assault the soul: We pray against all the bad accidents, and misfortunes, of our lives, and that we may escape violence, and sudden death; Because, (notwithstanding the notions some have of Predestination) death may be too surprizing to the best; and, if not prevented by the Providence of God, may advance towards, and seize, us, too, before we are prepared to receive it; and therefore, we, further, petition Heaven, that we may be fitted for our last encounter, and that we may submit with Christian comfort, and courage to, and have a safe deliverance at, the day of Judgment. We pray not, indeed, for the Souls of men after their departure out of this lower world; Because we believe, according to the Scriptures, *that as the tree falls, so it lies*; and as death finds us, so will
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Judgment too. Nor do we know, (and, *how can we unless it were revealed?*) of any middle place, where the souls of men may suffer to their improvement, and be purged by any material fire. (If we could suppose it to operate upon an immaterial being.) Yet we pray, as far, for men departed this life, as the Primitive Christians ever did, and the form of our blessed Lord, teaches us, in that Petition, *Thy Kingdom come : viz.* That, in order to the coming of the Kingdom of Glory, God would bring the just, that are departed this life, to an happy, and a blessed, Resurrection; that so Christs Church, which is Militant on Earth, may, finally, become Triumphant in the Heavens. And, we, always, give thanks, for the examples, and triumphs of those, who have died in the true faith of Christ, that we may rejoice with them; whose joy is now full, according to their capacity, and shall, at the great day, be much more enlarged. Our Liturgy is so excellently framed, that, as there is no sort of men, but what we have some petitions for; So there is no condition we can be cast into, but the whole community, who join in our Service, share with

with us in sympathy and affection; because they must remember us in our common Church prayers: And of this the *Litany* is so full and expressive, that particular Collects seem to be redundant, when this is used: yet we have even these too, very suitable to the state of any that would desire that their grievances may be expressed to Almighty God by him who offers up the prayers of the Congregation; As far as modesty and cleanness of language is able to present them; (though not in those terms in which they were formerly pitch'd up with a fork to load a Pulpit) and the Ministers hearty wishes are assisted by the devout affections, and consent, of the people. In a word, our Church directs, and her true obedient Sons practise, what the Apostle advises the *Philippians* to do (*Chap. 4. ver. 6.*) *In every thing, by prayer, and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God.* And, as they whom the Apostles first converted to the Christian faith, we continue stedfastly in the Apostles doctrine; and fellowship; and in breaking of bread; and in prayer. Our Creeds, in which

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we make the publick profession of our faith, contain all Articles, but yet no more, than the purest Christian Churches of the world have, in all Ages of their Religion, declared : They are neither stuffed with the additions of the Council of *Trent*, nor have we abated by the omissions of ancient Hereticks, or any that bear a newer date ; nor do we receive any point of faith, but what is plainly evident in the Scriptures : And, for these, we own neither spurious, nor generally doubted Books. Our fellowship, or society, is upheld, as all others must be, by those whose business it is to govern, and those whose duty it is to obey : And, in the quality of our Rulers, we have the advantage of some other Churches that are yet Protestant, in that we are governed by Bishops, for whose order, in the Christian Church, (notwithstanding any personal failures, to which all that is called man is subject ; or the malicious imputations of any wicked and unreasonable men :) we have the same evidence (if this word, too, is not in disgrace) and consent among the Antients for fifteen hundred years, as we have for the Baptism of Infants,

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for the abolishing of the day of the Jewish Sabbath, and, instead of it, for the establishment of the observation of the Lords Day : And, as far as I can yet learn, all the three seem to stand upon the same foundation ; and, if they fall, they must be ruined together. Our Sacraments are no more, than what our blessed Saviour instituted, and commanded also to be used in his Church, that we might have some visible signs, which, by vertue of his blessing, might signifie, and convey to us spiritual grace. And, in general, the prayers and praises, in our publick worship, are such, as, besides their fulness to represent the wants and gratitude of men, are uttered and performed with decency, gravity, and solemn devotion ; (unless we chance from one party or other to get a knavish Priest among us) both the Minister and the people bearing their proportionable shares in them, that every mouth may pray unto, and praise, the Lord. Due and comely gestures of our bodies are enjoyned, according to those customs that are significant, being commonly known in that Countrey in which we live ; and also due

affections and intentions of our minds : Besides, all is done in our Native Language ; that we may not kneel like Camels, to our burden ; but Gods service may be perfect freedom ; and we may not depart from our own manhood, but act rationally and ingenuously in all our devotions, when, by saying *Amen*, we give our consent to what (being a form, in our common Language) we do, or may, sufficiently understand before 'tis uttered. And where there are some repetitions, they are not vain ; (which will be proved in the handling my last Inference) but either they are in distinct services, or else altered, by invoking every person in the Trinity apart. The Responds are justifiable, both from the ancient Service of the Jews, and by the practice of the primitive Christians ; which has frequently been maintained, and enlarged on, by several Writers of our own Church : And the Rites, and outward Circumstances, of our devotion, as Ceremonies attending, are but few, and therefore cannot be burdensom ; and as few as may be that concern the people, which are abundantly justified in Bishop *Morton's* De-

Defence of the three innocent Ceremonies, usually bound up with the Conference before King *James*, at *Hampton-Court*; which is a Treatise that may satisfy any impartial person, that will without prejudice read, and peruse it with judgement, without putting a bar to his own satisfaction, by a previous resolution, never to be convinced. These things, therefore, being only circumstances that attend our devotion, relating to habits or gestures, or signs of our profession, cannot be Sacraments, because the institution of our Saviour is wanting; but, being in their own nature indifferent, they are only made necessary by the command of our Superiours, whom, in such things, the Scripture enjoyns us to obey: and they may, by the same authority, be either abated or taken o^a, by which they are now commanded; and their being symbolical, is so far from being an argument against their imposition, that if they were not so, they would be insignificant, and not fitting to be enjoined at all. And thus I have, in the general only, presented to the consideration of impartial men, the publick Service and Devotion of our Church,

which is enough to make it plainly appear, that we worship God in such a manner as is acceptable to him ; and that we offer him a Sacrifice with which he is well pleased : if his Word be true , the practice of other Churches are to be at all exemplary unto us ; and Christianity it self has been fairly handed down through the several Ages that have passed before us. If any one would see this more particularly justified , let him read *Dr. Comber* on the Services of our Church : or, at least, *Dr. Beveridges* Sermon at the opening of his Church.

C H A P. X.

THe second Inference from the former Discourse of prayer, is, That the Church of *Rome* must needs offend God exceedingly in their publick worship, and usual prayers; which appear openly to be impious and abominable to all true and sober Protestants, and all mankind, who judge of things by Scripture, and just reasoning from it, or indeed by their own natural sentiments. Nay, they are offensive to *Jews* and *Turks* so much, that they hinder the conversion of many to common Christianity, and cause them to keep themselves divided from such men, who worship God after so undue and irrational a model, and joyn Saints and Angels with him, whilst they petition such things from them, as are reserved to Gods prerogative to bestow; not only temporal advantages, but spiritual, and eternal; even grace here, and glory hereafter. And cer-

tainly such things, with the Types and Pictures which they fall down before, and worship too, thinking, like Heathens, to transfer their honour, they give to these, through them, to the Antitypes and Originals, must needs be as offensive to God, as they are to the eyes and ears of those, who being Christians, are soberly religious, or such who worship Almighty God as an infinite, living, Spirit. I need not now enter upon the debate, whether what I shall presently charge them with, includes plain Idolatry in it? This they have frequently been accused of; and I find their evasions (for I cannot well call them answers) to be very nice and thin; so that if they escape, they have good luck, to come so near the brink, and yet not fall into the ditch: They usually quarrel about the definition of Idolatry, till people are weary of writing to them concerning a description, which they will not allow, nor return another; or else, they retire to their old hole guarded by two words that scare the people, though they understand them not. In this, they are like some persons among ourselves, who, as they think, separate from

from us, upon hope of more high enjoyments, and purer administrations ; and yet, when they see an absurdity following them, they presently take shelter in a cloud ; and, like Fish in a River, mudd themselves. But, when men shall consider, how jealous God is of his honour, and the greatness and unpardonableness of such monstrous crimes, when they are persisted in, that give away Gods glory to another ; and place a Creature in his own Throne, whilst, in the mean time, they debase his Majesty to the low degree of some of the works of his hands : when rational men shall reflect on such things as these ; if they have any love, or fear, of God, and believe, that they must account for their actions ; certainly, they will not approach so near the limits and confines of Idolatry, as to communicate in the worship of the *Roman* Church, when the most subtil evasion, which the most acute among them have to free themselves from the guilt of Idolatry, consists only in a nice distinction betwixt *λαλρεία* and *δουλεία*, and a bold pretension that they offer their service ultimately to God, though they make some (as they think) glorified creatures,

creatures, the more immediate objects of their prayers, and adoration, through whom they will have all to pass, to the great Maker, and Creator of all. And yet he has no where appointed this; but directed all, who pretend to his service, to make their addresses immediately to himself, only through the merits of Christ. But, before I quite dismiss this charge, which has occasioned learned Books, and seems to be a great Controversie with the Papists in our times; I must acquaint the Reader, that there is one part of their worship, in the Eucharist, which is the adoration of the Host, that *Coster* the Jesuit, (in *Eucharid. controuv. Cap. 8. Sect. 10.*) says, cannot escape this charge upon it, if the foundation of it be not true. For (says he) if the true substantial body of Christ be not in that Sacrament; but what we receive is, in substance, only *bread, and wine*; Christ dealt unworthily with his Church, who, by occasion of his own words, (*This is my Body*) left it for 1500 Years together, in so great an error, and such Idolatry as was never seen, or heard of in the world; And, moreover, he delivers, in the
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proof of this last assertion ; That their error was much more tolerable, who worshipped a Gold, or Silver Statue, or, any Image of other matter for God, (as the *Gentiles*, in time pass'd, worshipped theirs, or, such as worship a piece of red Cloth, lifted up on the top of a Spear, as is reported of the *Laplanders*, or living creatures, as anciently the *Egyptians* did) than the error of those, who worship a bit of bread, which, hitherto (says he, but very falsely) the Christians have done, supposing Transubstantiation not true. So, that according to their own confession, (if the sense of this Doctor renders his own opinion probable) ; If our Saviours substantial, and corporeal *flesh*, and *blood*, be not in the Sacrament of the Lords Supper ; But Christs words, are to be understood Figuratively, according to the expressions used before, in the celebration of the Passover, in which Protestants have an apparent advantage in their proofs, and arguments ; then any man may safely say, that the Papists are Idolaters, when, they worship a wafer, instead of God ; Nay, the worst sort of Idolaters in the world, as the Jesuit says in the foremen-

mentioned place. And this deserves not, in reason, any severe censure among themselves ; because, upon their Doctrine of probabilities, the opinion of any one allowed Doctor among them, may be safely followed, without peril of damnation ; And upon the same principle, it may be very lawful to shift opinions, when these Doctors, contradict one another. This I am sure, when urged home, by one that has more skill in Controversie, than I, will take off that, by which they endeavour to charge those Protestants with great uncharitableness, who draw this impeachment high against them, when they accuse them of Idolatry, in their adoration of the Host : And invalidate the best answer they have, upon the supposition, that Transubstantiation is false ; *viz.* That, 'tis true to them, because they believe it ; and, therefore, although adoration of the Host would be Idolatry in another, of a contrary persuasion, yet, they cannot be guilty of such a crime ; Because, they worship not the Bread, which they believe, upon the words of consecration, to be absent ; but the Divinity of Christ, which, they suppose to be present,

sent, together with his body, and his soul : And, If it be so, then after they have conjured him into the accidents of *bread and wine*, so that these hide him from any discovery, by the bodily senses of mankind ; they seem first to make him present, then adore what they have so made, and at last eat up, and devour him, unless they can again slip him away betwixt their fingers, and their teeth together. Yet, if Transubstantiation, which is the foundation of all this, be false, then we may still charge the Papists with Idolatry, according to the probable opinion of the Jesuit. But what have we, dull Protestants, to do with this, or their Doctrine of probabilities, by which they, only, innocently design to serve their own turns ? To enter upon such points too far, will overdo my present purpose ; And I may, in the winding up of the bottom, be accused for charging the *Romish* Church with the Doctrines, and conclusions, of particular men, and causing all the excellent orders among them, to speak by the mouths of the Jesuits, which some Papists, (for designs best known to themselves) will readily, and not without cause, considering

dering all things, confels to be the most pernicious Order, (or rather Sect) that ever was established in the *Roman* Church, (*i. e.* the worst in the Christian World). Let us leave this then, and come out from among them, and meddle no longer with the nice affairs of particular Societies. It will be sufficient, for my present purpose, if, from my precedent Discourse of prayer, I may justly, and by due consequence, infer, that the Publick Service of the Church of *Rome*, is such, as is repugnant to Gods revealed Will; that it may justly be branded with Superstition, according to the proper signification of the word; that it is such, as the greater number of those, who are commonly present at it, cannot accompany with due, and proper intentions of their minds; that their prayers are such, as God has no where promised to hear; and their methods of address, such as Christianity never prescribed, nor were, by any Church, in the first times ever practised; nay, not by their own, till they had debauched the best Religion in the World, to advance themselves; corrupted good Manners, and caused the principles of the Gospel,

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to truckle to their fancies, and began to Sacrifice to their own net, and made St. *Peters* Successors at *Rome*, such cunning Fishermen, as caught only such Fish, as brought money in their mouths, making merchandize of mens souls, that they might gain a Temporal advantage, by the traffick. These are Heads sufficient for a Protestant to Discourse upon. But I must omit such, and many more, if I dilate coherently, to what I have confined my self. And therefore, I shall not now make discovery of that apparent Sacriledge in the Church of *Rome*, depriving the people, nay, the Priests too, unless they consecrate, of half their Communion, in the blessed Sacrament of the Lords Supper; whilst they think a pretty invention of concomitancy, will excuse their theft; when our Saviour instituted, and gave, the signs of *his body and blood*, distinct from each other, that his real death might be the better signified, since his *blood* was actually separated from his *body*. Nor, shall I write at this time, concerning the villany of their Confessions, and Absolutions; which, as they use them to base, and bloody, and Secular advantages,

tages, are most intolerable ; nor of all the ridiculous, indefensible, and burdensom Ceremonies, with which they usually so load their devotions ; that, baffling all true Evangelical worship, confound the intentions of mens minds, turn the reasonable service of their bodies into Pageanty, and Stage play, make their prayers, which they pretend to offer, nothing but an external shew, the labour of the lips, and outside devotion, turning their Priesthood into such a trade, that all the preparation of Learning, and Divinity, can enter them but Novices into the Schools of Exercise, and they had need serve another Apprentiship, to teach them the postures, and Giggombobs of action : Though these, and many other things, as vain, and bad, are prescribed, and commanded in their Books of Offices. The reason why I insist not now on such things as these, is, because the main Subject of my Discourse, being prayer only, I would not have my inferences, transgress the Rule, in charging Adversaries with such Errors, as are not plainly to be concluded from the premisses. It will be sufficient, at this time, to shew how abominable the
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Popish allowed prayers are, without intermixing the things that attend them. Now, the Papists must needs offend God with their publick prayers, and consequently must enrage, instead of appeasing, him, because they are not suitable to his Sacred word, nor, that Worship which Christians, in the purest times, used in their publick Divine Service. And this will be confirmed by two reasons : (1.) Because their publick Prayers are in an unknown tongue. (2.) Because, they pray to creatures, when they ought to pray to God only.

First, The Publick Prayers of the *Romish* Church, are in an unknown tongue ; sometimes unknown to the Priest himself ; who, by the help of accents, the advantage he has of hiding his infirmities, in those he pretends, as he is directed, to repeat secretly, and, by frequent use, can untowardly pronounce them. But more especially are they unknown to the people ; at least the generality of them, who cannot with any reason be supposed to understand languages beyond what their Mothers taught them ; unless Mother Church can inspire them with cloven
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tongues, and turn all its Children into Apostles. For *Latin*, in which the *Roman* publick prayers are uttered, is now become a learned Language, in all those Dominions, which the Pope over-spreads, and shadows with his wings; and, the gaining of it, requires a distinct, from vulgar, education, it being the general Language of no Country in the World; and, therefore, how should the multitude of a Nation, understand it? Now Publick Prayer, as I have shewed before, ought to be so composed, for matter, and words, that all, who are bound to join in it, should fully understand it, that they may apprehend, before they give their consent to it; that, so they may heartily agree in each petition, and say, *Amen*, at the close, and period. But how can people possibly consent, or, intend their minds, and engage their affections, with any reason, to such a service, which is uttered in a language, which they understand not? In such a case, they may, by the imposition of another, blaspheme God, when they think that they adore him, and wish for a curse, instead of a blessing. And, yet this is the general practice of the *Roman* Church.

Church: And would be, as it was, in *England*, were it established again; Though I may, notwithstanding, without disparagement to any, suppose, that many that may peruse this writing, however many, that heard it from the Pulpit, cannot pretend to understand *Latin*. And yet this Service is, what all persons, in the *Roman* Communion, are obliged to, under most rigid, and severe penalties; unless they will renounce the Decrees of that Council, (beyond the Controversie of our Neighbouring Nation) which, they must own to be general, and infallible, though both the adjuncts are falsely applied. For the Council of *Trent*, (Sess. 22. cap. 8.) determines, for this unreasonable, and brutish service, and obliges those, who understand not the Language: But not without due caution in the Decree; that a power of dispensing, may remain to the Pope (in cases, that may best serve his turn) with those, to whom he thinks fitting, to appoint Prayers in their vulgar Language: who may be inclinable to receive, or else to recall, banished, Popery. For the Council has worded their Decree of this, as if they were afraid of the Obje-

ctions of those, who, on the Apostles side, maintain prayers in a Known Tongue, but despise the contrary: viz. That it has seemed to the Fathers, not to be expedient, that every where Mass should be said in the vulgar tongue. This not to be expedient, is a soft expression, which they can, when they please, explain, effectually, that it is not lawful; and every where, when it serves their turn, will be easily exchanged for, any where. But it helps *Belarmin*, very much, in his answer to the argument, against the necessity of *Latin Service*, from the Popes Dispensation to the *Moravians*, to use the *Sclavonian Language*, in their Divine Offices; and helps forward the like Dispensation to our selves, for a present turn, in this matter; were we so well prepared, as a late executed Papist thought, to acknowledge the Supremacy of the Pope, and in other things, to conform so much to the *Romish Church*, that it might, in time, be again compleatly planted amongst us; that so the Pope, might receive plentiful fruits from those trees, which, from *Rome*, he had transplanted into so rich a soil, as *England* is. But at last, with-

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out question, (whatever might be granted at the first) we should be served, as *Bellarmin* tells us, the *Moravians* were, even turned wholly to our *Latin* Service, when the Pope had raised Bishops and Priests of his own, to advance themselves, and curb others, and *England* were well inhabited by *Italians*. But they, who can dispense with Gods Law, may easily dispense with one of their own: Especially, an Indulgence, in some things, may be a convenient instrument, to confound the principles which men, being used to, are loth to renounce all at once; and, to introduce others gradually, till they embrace all. Thus, 'tis usual for one, who intends to drive a flock of sheep before him; he will let them feed beyond their bounds, till he is got on the commanding side of them, and then he drives them into what Coop, or Pen, he pleases. And, truly we, who, by the favour of God, and piety of Princes, *Profess the truly Ancient, and Apostolick Faith*; had need walk circumspectly, and look about us, for fear of those Popish snares that are set for us, by Popish Emissaries, to catch, and imprison us first, that they may, in triumph, lead

us Captives to their great Prince, and Master. For the Pope is like the old Serpent, if you once allow him his desired Supremacy, he will quickly become Infallible, and then our whole Cause is lost : Give him but an hole for his head to peep through, and it will not be long, ere he wriggles in his whole body. But (Blessed be God) we have no need of him ; though he plainly discovers, that he has need of us : Nor do we desire to partake in, or rob him of, his service ; but to continue in our own most holy Worship ; And, if we can help it, he shall not take it away from us. 'Tis true, indeed, some *Romanists* have thought us to be readily prepared for their Communion ; being qualified with vice and debauchery enough ; which they themselves have been teaching us for many years, taking their advantage from that unlimited Loyal joy, which possess'd the Nation at the Kings Return, to take his Right, and to sit upon that Throne, from which he was barr'd by Usurpation, and Force. But this great Restauration being the handy-work of God, the Devil, and *Rome*, thought to have their advantage by it, and have
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several years tried their skill, but Gods Providence was too hard for them. And even yet, (praised for ever be the great name of the eternal *Jehovah*) though the *Romanists*, as well as other weak, yet presumptuous, men have thought us marching directly towards *Rome*; we have a Protestant King, to rule, and govern, us, such generous, and faithful Counsellors, who advise him, and such skilful, and stout Champions, to encounter them; and, above all, the God of Protestants to undermine, and resist them; that we may yet say, *The Lord is our helper*; we will not fear what man can do unto us, *Nay*, though an host of men should be encamped against us, we will not slavishly fear evil; although we are sensible, that in this Cause of Religion, (which loves not to be planted with the point of a Sword) our Adversaries have exchanged their writings, for stratagems, left their Arguments, and were almost ready to run to their weapons. But whither will zeal transport a man, beyond the present subject of debate, when he meets with an enemy, that is always betraying, and ready to pierce a mans Bowels? I shall, therefore, inforce this Argument, and Inference,

against the Papists prayers in an unknown tongue, with two Considerations, that seem to me, to determine the Controversie; and are sufficient, with reference to this particular, to abate the kindness of any person, (at least all that are well instructed) to the *Roman Church*, and check any inclinations to the embracement of such a Communion, whose constitution hinders them from understanding their prayers, that ignorance may make men fit for their devotions, and, parting with their reason, and sense too, they may be drawn after the Popes Chariot, with their eyes put out, and, at last, be led into a feigned Purgatory, howling, and squaling, as if they were all *Quakers*, that he may, when he pleases, as the silver moves, open the doors, or, keep them fast; and when he turns the Key at last, instead of giving them joy, and liberty, they may find, they are entered into a real Hell, from which there is no redemption at all. But yet, before we go thither, or, pray away our own understandings, in such a worship, in which it is impossible for those to joyn, who ken not *Latin*, in which it is delivered: Let us, (1.) Consider, whether

ther St. *Paul* be not above the Pope, and the word of God, rather to be credited, than the cunningly devised Fables of men? This great Apostle, and Doctor of the *Gentiles*, (*1 Cor. 14. 14.*) acquaints the World with such language as this; *If I pray* (says he) *in an unknown tongue, my Spirit prayeth; but my understanding is unfruitful.* By unknown tongue, every body knows what is meant; but in the latter clauses, some may be ignorant; and others make use of these expressions, and their own vanity, and unskilfulness together, to lead men from *Latin Service*, into a rude, and ungovernable devotion. By Spirit, therefore, is meant, the gift of the Spirit, not flowing forth in extempore expressions now, but in strange languages in the times of the Apostles; as appears by St. *Pauls* interpretation of himself: For, when he had exhorted men to employ one of the Spiritual gifts, forementioned in this Chapter, to the edification of the Church; (*ver. the 12th.*) In the next he explains it, by *an unknown tongue*: Nay, in the very particular Text quoted, *the praying of the Spirit*, is, apparently, the praying in an unknown tongue; *If I pray* (says he)

he) *in an unknown tongue, my Spirit prayeth, but mine understanding is unfruitful.* That is, though he understood the language himself; yet it being unknown to others, his being acquainted with the sense of his own prayers, could not render them beneficial to those that heard them. And therefore he concludes upon the whole, that *he would pray with the Spirit*; yet so, that he might pray with the understanding too. He would not only pray in such a language, by himself, which he understood, that he might accompany his words with due intention, and suitable affections: But he would pray also, that his understanding might be fruitful unto others, by putting his petitions into such a language, as the people might be able to understand, that so they might joyn with him, and be edified by it.

Secondly, Consider, that prayer, not understood by those who are to joyn in it, being uttered in a language which they are ignorant of, loses those blessed influences and ends to which it was designed, and ought to have upon the Devotionists; particularly, by their understandings to move their wills; and,

and, obtaining their consent, to raise their affections suitable to the petitions made for them; that so the act of the Minister may become their own, and they, knowing what is delivered, may rationally consent, and earnestly desire the things prayed for, and have their several interests in all. For, they are Beasts, rather than men, who are driven on they know not whither ; and say *Amen* to such petitions, or, at all adventures, assert the truth of such propositions, which they have no apprehension of, and may, with reference to their understandings, be as well false as true. In such a case they fix their seal, either by the example, or authority, of another, to what, for ought they know, obliges them to ruin, and may sign their execution when they hope to receive a pardon. It is impossible a man should, with any reason, signify his assent to that, or heartily wish for those things, mentioned in a prayer, when he does not understand whether they are included in it or no : Unless men can think it rational to set their hands, at all adventures, to every paper that is brought to them ; when they may sign a Bond, instead of a Release, or make away an estate

state instead of making it sure to them ; But I may be confident, men are wary enough in this, and need not, unless they are foolish to a Proverb, any Monitor to caution them in it, though their want of skill may cause them to advise in some nice and critical difficulties. And is it reasonable, think ye, that the Children of this world should be always wiser than the Children of light ? Or that any, to whom the glorious Gospel is revealed, should be more cautious, and exact, in relation to their secular welfare, than they are with reference to their eternal advantages ? Will they beg a Serpent instead of a Fish, or desire a Stone instead of Bread ? A little Child will hardly be so gull'd and cheated ; but, when such an exchange is profer'd, will throw it away, with rage and contempt. But, further ; that which aggravates the fault of men so easily imposed upon, is, that, where they give their assent without reason, and desire what they do not understand, whether it be advantageous or unprofitable to them, they chuse what is no object of their choice ; because it is impossible for them to apprehend any goodness at all in that,
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whose nature and accommodation to them they are totally ignorant of; nor can any man give a true assent to that whose truth he cannot discern, nor has any overpowering reason to believe. This our own experience, upon reflection, must fully convince us of: Or if any that have immortal souls within them, and are quite sunk into rottenness and clay, so that they will not, or cannot, intend their minds to receive satisfaction within themselves; yet, if they have sense enough to be common Christians, of the lowest form in the School of our Lord; the authority of his Apostle must convince them; and they must, on divine revelation, believe, that praying in an unknown tongue must be nonsense and folly in him, that thus offers to God he knows not what, and consents to that of which he has no knowledge at all. *If I know not, says S. Paul, the meaning of the voice, I shall be to him that speaketh, a Barbarian; and he that speaketh, a Barbarian unto me. (1 Cor. 14. 11.)* And verse the 16. *When thou shalt bless with the spirit, (that is, as before, in an unknown tongue) how shall he that possesseth the*
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the room of the unlearned say Amen (i. e. give his assent) *at thy giving of thanks, since he understandeth not what thou saiest?* To speak or write more in such a plain case would apparently disparage an Auditor, and a Reader; and a man might be accused of wasting time, and of rendring our adversaries very considerable in the defence of such a point, in the management of which, they have little or nothing to say for themselves, besides this: That Latin Service, being formerly their custom, when it was commonly understood in the Western Empire, they think it fitting and honourable to continue it still, lest a change might make them lose the credit of Antiquity; though the principal reason of uttering Divine Service in this language is gone, and becomes an argument that points a quite contrary way, and directs all Churches to their vulgar language; since the Latin is so far from being the common tongue, in which the multitude of men express their thoughts, and come to the understanding each other, even, in those places, in which, by the *Roman Church*, the publick Service is injoynd to be used, that

that the common people do not understand it, even in *Italy* it self. But the Church of *Rome* has one reason for it, above all that the great ones will let us know from themselves ; but yet they do not, here in *England*, stop our mouths ; so that (blessed be God) we can speak it for them ; though they had rather that we would still hold our tongues. Yet, the reason is this ; Because hiding, under an unknown tongue, the abomination and false opinions, which they practise, and uphold, in their publick offices, their people are kept in great ignorance ; and dark devotion nourishes them into a great zeal, and blind obedience, that the Priests may make impressions on them, and they may receive and embrace those instrumental principles that pick their Pockets, for the advantage of holy Church, and empty their Purfes into the Popes Coffers. And this is the most weighty reason for their religion in those particulars, in which it is departed from Primitive Christianity. But yet, methinks I have so much confidence in the rational natures of mankind, that, where they could understand, they would examine ; and if
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they once arrived at that, they would quickly reject every Article of the Church of *Rome* which they have added to the Apostles Creed, and what the Reformed Protestant Church of *England* owns. And I am fully persuaded, that the generality of the *English* Nation (who cannot, if they have been any thing serious, but be well acquainted with the necessary points delivered in the Scriptures) would so loath and abhor the *Roman* Breviaries and Mass-Books, were they faithfully translated into our common Language, so that both parties might sign the Copy, that the people would confute them themselves, without the toil or pains of another. But the *Romanists* had rather still lurk behind the Curtain, deal with the credulous, and lock up the Key of Knowledge, by keeping the Scriptures from the searches of the people; unless they are such particular parts, as they think fit to afford them the perusal of: This better serves their turn, than to permit a bold and inquisitive multitude to view all, that they may make discoveries, and twattle to one another, and so, at last, make enquiries into those Services

vices of their Church, (which the Governours are willing should be accounted divine) till the people should be able, by due search, to confute the *Roman* Prayers by the Scriptures; and then, in a little time more, the *Capitol* it self must be delivered, when they had no more *Geese* to defend it. I see therefore, in the *Roman* way, the blind must lead the blind, till both together fall into the ditch; where I shall, at present, leave them, as to this point of *Latin* Service, till their Seers are able to pluck them out. For, when error is attended with an obstinate resolution to maintain it, even against the testimony of an Apostle, the persons, thus possessed with it, are only to be treated as things insensible, not minding the authority, by which Christian Religion is established. And when people thus present petitions to Almighty God, which they cannot so much as pretend to understand, 'tis plain, that they offer the sacrifice of fools; and their Priests sacrifice to their own net; and 'tis in vain to perswade in such a case, where the people delight in their own slavery; and the Priests love their covetousness too well, to forsake the

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Trade, in which they can so easily impose on those, whom, by such means, they keep in ignorance, and so make an outside godliness their gain. Certain it is, that the people, under the *Roman* yoke, can only draw nigh to God, in their Publick Service, with their lips at best; when their hearts, and minds, being under an impossibility of accompanying them, must of necessity be far from him: and they lose, also, the blessed influence of all their Publick Prayers on themselves, in raising their affections, acting their graces, mortifying their sins, and prompting them to their duty; all which, prayers, well composed, uttered, and understood, must needs effect upon the minds of well inclined Devotionists.

And so I proceed to another Argument we have against the Publick Prayers of the *Romanists*; That they pray to Creatures, when they ought to pray to God alone. That God only is to be the object of our prayers in divine worship, I have already shewed in the Third Chapter of this Discourse; And that the *Romanists* pray to Angels, and Saints departed, their Service is so full

full and frequent an evidence of it, that they themselves will not deny it. They endeavour, therefore, to justify the thing, by the bold assertions of their own Authors, and without any plain authority but from the Heathens, and themselves; and without any solid and substantial argument. Yet, that I may give the Reader an hint or two, that none, unless he has a brow of brass, may say to those who understand not, or else never look'd into their allowed Breviary, or their common and established Mass-Book, that we charge them with what they are not guilty of: I must instance in a few particulars, in which prayers are made to glorified creatures, and to some inanimate things too, in the publick Offices of the *Roman Church*; since some of the professors of that Religion are so bold, and apparently wicked, that, to serve a turn, they will affirm, 'tis dark in the face of the Sun, and light even in the midst of darkness; and nothing, almost, according to their principles of equivocation, and mental reservation, if they take also the Doctrine of probable opinions in to their assistance, can be propounded, but they may either

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affirm, or deny, as it makes for the advantage of their Church. Nay, they are bound, according to the determination of *Bellarmin*, to say, that Vertue is Vice, or Vice Vertue, if the Pope so concludes either. But yet my present charge is so apparently true, that all must own it to any that have knowledge of their publick Service; whatever they may, at any time, reply to the ignorant that receive the charge upon the authority of others. For, in their *Commune Apostolorum*, there is an Hymn consisting both of prayer and praise, in which we find these expressions; *Vos sacri iusti iudices! &c.* speaking to the Apostles, they say, O ye just Judges, and Lights of the world, we beseech you, with the desires of our hearts, to hear the prayers of your supplicants: ye that shut the heavens with a word, and unlock them again, loose us we pray you from all our sins, by your command: you to whose authority is subject both the health and misery of all, &c. In their Office to the Blessed Virgin you have these expressions, O Mary! Mother of Grace, Mother of Mercy, protect us from the enemy, and receive us at the hour of death. And let the Virgin Mary, together
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with her off-spring, bestow her blessing upon us ; and the like. I shall instance, yet, in one more, (although, many know, I might translate a multitude of the same nature into this Discourse) and that shall be in the service relating to one who was the Founder of one of the most pernicious Sects that ever infested the Christian world ; in comparison to many of whom the *Gnosticks* were Saints ; the *Goths* and *Vandals* were of a Religious Order ; the Great *Turk* becomes a Christian, and the wild Fanatick is temperate and mild. I mean *Ignatius Loyola*, who founded the first Society of the *Jesuits*, to perplex and confound the Councils of Princes, and carry on mischievous designs against us, as well by those who have been at the top, as those that remain at the bottom of the Ladder. In the Service at the Celebration of his Festival, there is this Prayer, or Collect on the one and thirtieth day of *July* : O God ! who, for the greater propagation of thy glory, hast strengthened thy Church militant, (properly so indeed under the command of a Jesuit) with a new aid by blessed *Ignatius* ; grant that we who strive, or fight, on earth, by
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the imitation and help of him, may deserve, with him, to be crowned in the heavens.

And if they all deserve the same lot, may they together possess the same place ; for fear they should be as troublesome to us in the other world, as they have been in this. But I will no longer employ my self in translating their prayers. Many instances of their petitions, to Saints and Angels, have been exposed to view, in most Books that have been by Protestants written against them. I heartily wish, that those, who use such prayers, understood them better ; because they would, then, more easily see how poyson is wrap'd in gilded pills. Why should I relate the Attributes which the Church of *Rome* gives to the Cross of Christ ? as great as to him who suffered on it ; and yet have no method to shift their blasphemy, but by the same way in which they translate their prayers, and praises too, from the Cross, to him who died upon it. And though I love not to pursue a Lion to his den, for fear that being weary, he may be hungry too, and take some opportunity to rend and devour ; Yet it would be a strange expression from a Protestants mouth, that
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which must needs grate upon the ears of all the devout worshippers of God, and such as believe that their prayers are heard, only through the merits and intercession of Christ : *Sancta Crux ! ora pro nobis. Holy Cross ! pray for us. And Ave Crux, spes unica. Hail Cross, our only hope,* would be words that to us would not only seem ridiculous, but, abominable ; and, if at all considered, to any that hope in the mercy of God, through him who suffer'd and dyed upon the Cross. But, notwithstanding all, these are things as common with the Papists, as whining, and another sort of nonsense are among some Separatists, that pretend to set themselves at the greatest distance from them. Nay, any may see, (if they have skill, and leisure, to peruse it, in an office of, or relating to, the Holy Cross, Printed at *Paris* (1664.) by publick authority, such strange expressions as these are : After it has begun with a Prayer to God, to free men from their enemies by the Sign of the Cross, (which, if we should make a thousand times upon our selves, we should hardly be quit from those that are so devout to it) we find, afterwards, these expressions,

O Crux venerabilis, &c. I know not how they may edifie in *Latin*; but I am sure, that they sound harsh in *English*; and good or bad, thus they run; *O venerable Cross! who hast brought salvation to us miserable; with what praises shall I extoll thee? because thou hast prepared heavenly life for us.* And, in the close of another Hymn, the style, tho' a new one, is in these words, *O victory of the Cross, and admirable sign! make us to triumph in the Celestial Court; or the Court of Heaven.* But this is an ungrateful task to me, thus to transcribe the most abominable Popish Prayers, and as unpleasant, as it can be, to Protestants to read it. And therefore I shall not fill these Papers with those particular addresses, which many of them make to individual Saints (as they account them) who are departed this life, for particular things, which they suppose to be in the power of them singly to bestow, whilst they appropriate one faculty to one, and a second to another; whilst they constitute a first to be a Patron to their Horses, another to their Sheep, a third to their Hogs, and another to keep off some Disease from themselves, or at least, to cure it:
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And so they make them Grooms, or Farriers, or Swiniards, or Shepherds, or Physicians, or Mountebanks, or what they please: For I am weary of raking in such a dunghill, in which there is, neither Barley-corn nor Jewel. We may know their opinion, and practice too, in this point, from *Bellarmin*, who was the great Champion for the Church of *Rome*, in that, at the close of every Tome of his Controversies, he joyns the Virgin *Mary* with God, in the thanks he renders for help in the composure; *Praise be given to God and the blessed Virgin.* Nay, *Gregory de Valentia* exceeds him in the Transport; For he (possibly as he thought from good manners) puts the Virgin before her Son, in the close of some of his Books; and sayes, *Laus Deo, & beatæ Virgini Mariæ, & Domino Jesu Christo.* Praise be to God, and to the blessed Virgin Mary, and to the Lord Jesus Christ. Which, whether his meaning were to constitute a new Trinity, by discarding the old, omitting the Holy Ghost, and changing that Sacred Person for the Mother of our Lord, I must leave to the judgement of others. The Conquest, in the Battel at *Lepanto*, was
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plainly ascribed, not to God, but to the conduct of the Virgin *Mary*; which appears by their Festival in memory of it, called *Festum Sanctæ Mariæ à victoriâ*, celebrated at the beginning of *October*. 'Tis a common thing for the *Romanists* in their prayers to Angels, or departed Saints, not only to beseech them to intercede in their behalf, when intercession for men, in Heaven, is plainly founded on their Redemption upon Earth; and therefore Christ who is the Mediator of Redemption, is alone capacitated, to be the Mediator of Intercession: But they rely, also, on those whom they invoke, in such cases, for aid, and protection, nay, for grace here, and glory hereafter; and, in consequence of this, all their curiously invented distinctions will never bring them off from the horrid guilt, of giving away Gods Glory to another, since by their petitions, they imply a dependance on creatures, whom they invoke, for such things as are in Gods power alone to give, what ever Messengers some of them may be, to convey the blessings of Heaven to us. And this must be odious in the sight of God, as it is abominable to all good men, who understand what Religion means.

means. But let us allow the evasions of the *Romanists*, in these points, to be as cunning, and plausible, and witty as they please : Yet is it not strange, that the Governours of a Church, should compose prayers, in such language, and stile, that the first, and natural signification of the words, must lead the simple into Error, and Idolatry ? Unless you suppose them to be all Schoolmen, that understand how to split an hair, and know how to pick straws well, that have the artificial knack of nicety and distinction, or heads so naturally made for abstraction, that they ken a distinction, as soon as 'tis invented, and uttered by another ; and yet they can have nothing but these arts, and tricks, to save them from the edge of their own prayers and such an edge as is fatal too. This is like making any point hard, that was before easie, that a man may have the honour of unridling the difficulty of his own making, and render the same easie again, and so end where he first began. This is only turning round over a rope, to bring ones head into its right place : And to what purpose these things are, let the first inventors answer themselves. It cannot other-

otherwise appear to me, but that these things grow from Atheism, and irreligion, and are designed only to bring forth fruits convenient for this world, but no way procuring glory in the next. For if there is a God, whom men ought to worship with their minds, and souls, as well as with their bodies, in which all present at it, ought to be, and are concerned, and in which they should unanimously join; what a monstrous thing is it to have the expressions in this Service so worded, that they are rightly to be understood, only by the Learned? Whilst the people may, by the termination of their Worship, in that to which they immediately address, not understanding the force of a distinction, or, if they did, its acute operation to save themselves from the danger they are in, by their Publick Service, be Idolaters in practice, though they might hate the name, and the thing too, if once they had it explained to them; however, their Priests, in the mean time, may shift for themselves; and, 'tis beyond my knowledge, to know how they can. God deliver us from such devotion, of which so gross and thick ignorance is the Mother, which
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yet how far it may excuse the vulgar, to whom, in the *Roman Church*, 'tis invincible; I shall leave to the great God to judge, together, with all those, who are resolved that their hazards shall be continued to themselves, by refusing to follow their own understandings, but willingly permit their Priests, to lead them in the dark; it being easier it seems, and, for ought they know, much more pleasant to be always blind, than to see. Such are like the *Samaritans*, our Saviour rebukes, (*Joh. 4. 22.*) *Who are resolved to worship in the mountain, although they know not what they worship.* But let us, who are members of the best Church in the Christian world, continue to offer to the great God, such prayers as we understand, that both the affections, and intentions of our minds, may bear a due proportion to our expressions; Let us, whatever others do, devoutly pray to the Supreme God, in, and through the Merits of our Lord Jesus Christ, since we are encouraged thus to come to the Throne of Grace, that we may find help in time of need. I have proved, in a former part of this Discourse, that God, only, is to be the Object

ject of our prayers; and that such service, as we account Divine, is not to be given to another: I have also shewed, that our words, in prayer, must be plain, and intelligible, as well as they ought to be grave, and serious, that the intentions of our minds may accompany, and guard the expressions of our tongues. But such rules men apparently transgress, who pray in a language which they do not understand, or, to Angels, or departed Saints, or, to a piece of Bread, when they adore the Host, and worship a Wafer. Such things as these, were never heard of in the first, and purest, Ages of Christianity, and God grant, that they may never, again, be introduced among ourselves, in these last Ages of the World; that so Christ may find a true faith, and devotion too, here upon the Earth, *when he comes riding triumphantly in the Clouds, to pass Sentence upon the whole world.* Let us resist the Pope, and his Janissaries, with the same argument, by which our Saviour baffled the Devil; *Get thee behind me Satan; for it is written, thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve,* (Matth. 4. 10.). And this Example, and Text
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together, methinks, should abash all pretending, and deter all real, Christians from making any Religious Addresses to immortal Angels, or Saints departed; and much more to any creatures more inferiour, constituted, only, by human fancy, to be the representatives of these; lest God, suffering long by their sins, may at last leave them to their own hardness, to believe a lie, and to a strong delusion to which they are enslaved, that at last they may be damned, because they have turned the glory of their Creator into the image of a creature; beguiling themselves of their reward, in a voluntary humility, in worshipping of Angels, (like the Superstition of the Essens, among the *Jews*; or the Idolatry of *Simon Magus*, in the times of the Christians) which the Apostle rebukes the *Colossians* for (Chap. 2. 18.). As if men were, at this time of the day, (who have more than enough evidence) of the mind of those whom St. *Chrysostome* mentions in his Homilies on this Epistle, that said, We must come to God by his Angels; and not by Christ, because that is an honour too high for us: Against which error, this holy Father says, is the chief design of
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the Epistle to the *Colossians*. I need not, I hope, ask my Protestant Readers, the question which St. Paul propounds to the *Romans*, (Chap. 10. 14.). *How shall men call on him, in whom they have not believed ?* No more than I need, in our daies, mention that which follows next : *How shall ye believe in him, whom ye have not heard ? or how can ye hear without a preacher ?* Only this deserves some small consideration amongst some men, though not any with others, who have a true Ministry ; *How can they preach, that are not sent ?* 'Tis plain, even by the Confessions of some *Romanists* themselves, that there is no precept, or plain example, for prayer, either to Saints, or Angels, in the Scriptures ; Yea, they bear testimony that Sacred petitions to both, have been rejected, even by those unexceptionable Saints, and Angels, to whom they were offered, or actually made. Let not any, therefore, among all the Protestants of the true Established Church of England, (as God has formerly complained of others) *leave the fountain of living waters, to hew to themselves broken Cisterns, that can hold none.* But let us stand fast in the unity of the Spirit,

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rit, in a true, holy, Catholick Communion in our prayers, professions, and Christian Sacraments ; *And with one mind striving together for the faith of the Gospel ; and let us nothing be terrified by our adversaries ; as St. Paul exhorts us, (Philip. i. 27.).* Thus continuing in the Communion of that Church, to which we do belong, and contending earnestly for that faith, which was delivered to the Saints ; God will either preserve us, by his power, from being ground by those two Millstones, betwixt which we seem, at present, to be placed, and give us an happy deliverance from our Controversies, and troubles ; or, assuredly, *give us a Crown of Glory, above the reach of Papists, or Fanaticks.* Arise, O Lord ! Let thine enemies be scattered, and let them that hate thee, flee before thee. But do thou arise, also, and have mercy upon Sion ; For the time to favour it, yea, the set time is come : So we that are thy people, and sheep of thy pasture, will give thee thanks for ever, and will alwaies be shewing forth thy praise, from generation, to generation.

C H A P. XI.

THe most ungrateful task is still behind, whilst I must argue *with my Brethren according to the Flesh*, my dear Country-men, and fellow Protestants, who yet separate from the best Established Church in the world: Whilst my last Inference must, to my great grief, be this : That they who now separate from us, and yet live among us, under the care, and protection of the most indulgent Prince, that ever swayed the *English* Scepter ; And in a Church (over which, though he spreads his Authority) that has her arms open to all penitents ; and, when they become void of all hypocrisie, *She loves her Neighbours, as she does her self* : Yet it will appear, from the former Discourse, that those who yet continue their separation from us , under the pretence of greater Reformation, and a more pure, and Evangelical, Worship, do not pay homage, in their prayers,

ers, to the great God, in such a manner as is suitable to his Attributes, mans dependance, and that infinite distance betwixt their Creator, and themselves. For, if we consider him as the Maker of men, endowed with all Glory, and Perfection, whose Greatness is commensurate to his Being, and both Infinite ; whose Power admits neither restraints, or limits, besides, what falsehood and contradictions may imply, in which eternal truth bounds it self, his Essence, not admitting any imperfection : Who is Omniscient, and searches the inmost recesses of the minds of men, views our retirements, and discerns our thoughts afar off ; whose goodness, also, has been so extended, as well in Creation, as Providence, that he justly commands, and merits too, all the profound Worship, and Adoration, which our most quick and sprightly invention, guided either by pure natural reason, or by rules of his own Prescription, is able to prompt us to the composition of ; And, lastly, He is a God of that infinite ability to revenge indignities offered to him, that he can as easily punish the insolence of those, that either, contemn, or neglect, his worship,

or render himself mean by it, as he can encourage the devout, or bless those who with humility petition it. So that reflecting on the loose and irregular prayers of those, who are to be considered in this Inference, we must (as I suppose) conclude, without any great difficulty, that upon the view of the matter, and circumstances of their devotion, comparing it with what is due to so great a Majesty, who is the Sovereign Commander, and Disposer of the Universe, the worship of those, whom I am now to deal with, does not comport with the greatness, and Supreme excellencies of himself. And this is far more easie to discern, than to limit, or prescribe a suitable devotion. For as *Cotta* saies, in *Cicero, de nat. Deor. lib. 1. Mihi non tam facile in mentem venire solet quare verum sit aliquid quam quare falsum.* I cannot so readily give a reason why any thing is true, as why it is false. And most men must consent to this: For how many of us have great and exalted conceptions of persons, and things, till experience makes nearer and more strict inspections? Thus the Mountain *Olympus*, whose height is so extolled by the Poets, and

and ancient *Greeks*, that it is said to exceed the Clouds, and lodge its top in the very Skies ; is yet said by *Plutarch* (in *Æmilian*) that, upon the measure of *Xenagoras*, it was but a mile, and an half, and about seventy paces perpendicular. So some men, that separate from us, manage their devotion with so much zeal, and heat, and thick language, with clouds about it, attended with such a mournful tone, and direful expressions, that an uninterested person must, at the first, of necessity think, that though their most profound abasements laid them on the ground, yet their voices, must reach the highest Heavens, and their earnest, and most passionate, expressions could not, certainly, be stopt by the Clouds, but must dart themselves clear through them, and ascend above the *Moon*, *Sun*, and more lofty *Stars*, and lodge themselves in the highest Heavens. Nay, they themselves who, by rubbing, and chafing, and other implements, have been advanced to this height of carrying their souls out of their bodies, like the Heathen Enthusiasts, who *divined in a fury*, have caused other men to believe, that to be inspired from above, which

takes its original from mens own indisposition, and madness. Such things, being the fruits of a warm constitution, and the effects of an odd temperament in mens bodies, pass frequently for the perfection of the mind ; and an airy soul, when it breaths forth extraordinary fancy, is supposed to be blown upon first by that, *which bloweth where it listeth* ; And yet this may be the fruits of passion, and the effects of an ill temperament of body, that passes for the perfection of an inspired mind ; and many things are supposed to proceed from the communication of Spirits, which are nothing but a disease of the body ; nay, oftentimes, the product, only, of craft and subtilty. This may imitate some primitive inspired, extraordinary, worship, when the Prophets spake by turns, and others were to hold their tongues ; But, though it resembles some kind of worship to God, 'tis now no more than an unreasonable service. And 'tis no wonder, that error, and falshood, being fairly varnished with a shew of truth, should be embraced by many Profelytes, who either will not, or cannot, give themselves time, and retirement to consider, and
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search diligently into causes, and effects. And this is too apparent, and troublefom also to many men, who find these things much operating on the weaker Sex, who are usually more guided by affection, than reason, *and so are led captive to divers lusts.* Yet that which causes error to be courted instead of truth, is some resemblance it bears to it; because it has (as *Plutarch* reports of the *Egyptian Fables*) ἀμυδρὰς πνὰς ἐμφάσεις τῆς ἀληθείας, some faint and obscure representations of truth; and these things are very often promoted by a persons education, pre-disposition, and temperament of body, in which a soul is imprisoned, and locked up; but, at last, breaks loose by the strength of the disease, through the pores of the body, and obtains an unusual vehicle to carry it. We read of some in *Tully*, (*de Divinat. lib. 1.*) who affirmed, (and we need not go so far back for them) *ad opinionem imperitorum fictas esse religiones*; That Religion was fitted according to the opinions of those that were unskilful, and not able to make inquisition into the nature, and truth of things. But if ever there were the Being, and Attri-

butes of God so stated, as we consent in here, and yet a worship given to that Being, as unsuitable to him, as it is almost possible, which imposed a cheat upon mankind; Then (considering the principles, the favourers pretend to be their conduct) an odd sort of Dissenters, among us, apparently practise it. Nay, their way of worship is suited to the dispositions of the weaker, and more infirm, judgements; and this appears in very many of the Profelytes to it, who really believe what they profess, and their Religion is not weighed by their advantage. For we find by experience, and more converse than they were willing formerly to have with us, that Women are wonderfully devoted to Separation, and though their Husbands are prevailed upon to come to Church, the Wives are yet addicted to a Conventicle: But few men, who do not make secular interest their God, of any briskness and strength of parts, embrace those methods: Yet some there are, that permit themselves to be bound hand, and foot, with their wives apron-strings; or follow the paths and allurements of a Mistress, or the custom of their Trade, or the advantage of an Office,

Office, and the same Motives (when Religion is so low) will bring them back to Church again ; or equally incline them to *Geneva*, or *Rome*. And, truly, I have observed in my time, (though I wish not for the opportunity again) that the numbers of Sexes, are extremely disproportionable among them : Which has created some wonder, but no astonishment. For I quickly found, that it had been the method of the great Deceiver of mankind, to gain an interest in the weaker Sex ; that he might the more easily entangle the stronger. Thus the old Serpent began with *Eve*, and proceeded afterwards by *Miriam*, the Sister of *Moses*, and still persisted by the wife of *Job* : Nay, after the Revelation of the glorious Gospel, when his power, and craft, was ebbing, and must abate ; the *Jews*, by his instigation, stirred up the devout and honourable women, to expel *Paul* and *Barnabas* out of their Coasts, (*Acts* 13. 50.). Thus also *Simon Magus*, that bewitching Father of the *Gnosticks*, accomplished his designs by the help of *Helena* ; *Montanus*, by *Maximilla* ; the *French* men, by their *Pucelle de Dieu* ; and our *English Anabaptists*, by their

their *Maid of Kent*. I mention not these things, to undervalue the glory of that Sex; although it may serve to abate their pride, and stop their mouths when they are troublesome, and censorious; since not only the sin of man, but the propensity and inclination to it, came, at first, by the means of a Woman. But I urge this, to abate our zeal and affection to such a worship, in which the weaker sort become the great Devotionists, and not to espouse wayes of Religion, by the example of those, whose airy thoughts will not settle long enough upon one object, to consider it well: And, though this be not a sufficient argument to conclude against the worship of those, with whom we have now entered into debate; yet, it is enough to raise suspicion, and make us inquisitive about such matters. But, if we approach nearer to the worship of our Dissenters, we shall find their prayers, many times, to consist of such expressions, as are too often unworthy of the Deity; whilst they assume too great familiarity with God, and the persons that utter them, in their peoples behalf, are more bold with him, than a well bred person will

will pretend to, even among such as are not much his superiours. *Cotta*, in *Tully*, (*De natur. Deor. lib. 3.*) having severely disputed against the *Grecian*, and the *Roman*, Gods says: *Omnis igitur talis, à philosophiâ pellatur error; ut cum de diis immortalibus disputemus, dicamus digna diis immortalibus.* When we speak of the Immortal Gods, let us speak things worthy of them. The Heathen may here instruct the Christian, or at least, some that pretend to it, who in spite of confutation, would be accounted the best of that denomination; that bold expressions, uncouth clamours, and loose, incoherent, and, many times, insignificant sentences, which are the effects of inconsideration, sudden inventions, and the *extempore* raptures of a nimble fancy, do not suit with the wisdom and greatness of that God, to whom all our prayers are addressed; nor the reason and understandings of those souls which he has created in us, to render us capable of serving him here with a rational devotion, and for the enjoyment of eternal communion with him hereafter. Can the great God, whose glory is inscribed on the highest Heavens, who
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makes the earth tremble at his presence, who rolls the world up and down according to the appointment of his will, whole disproportion to any of his most stately creatures, is unbounded and infinite; can he admit such familiarity from the workmanship of his hands, as shall take away, almost, all awful veneration, and regard to him? 'Tis true indeed, our blessed Saviour, by the Sacrifice of himself, has *made us Kings and Priests to God, and reconciled us by his blood, who were, before, at enmity with him*; But he has not made us independent; or united us so closely to him, as if there remained no distance or disproportion betwixt us; although the $\lambda\delta\gamma\Theta$ is a cement exceedingly honourable to us; in whom, when the Divinity assumed the human nature, yet the nature were not mixed, no, not when they made but one person. God has, through Christ, admitted us to Grace here, and promised us eternal Glory hereafter: But this favour is an argument to heighten our devotion, not to abate the external signs of distance in our worship, nor to detract from that wonderful reverence springing from some preparative considerations

tions of Gods excellencies, which we have in our minds, and ought alwayes to accompany our prayers. *Serve the Lord with fear,* (sayes David) nay, *rejoyce also, before him, with trembling,* (*Psal. 2. 11.*) And can this agree with rude behaviour, and odd language, and brawling noises, which are frequently heard from wild Zealots, and *extempore* Devotionists, whilst they are praying to an Almighty, Great, and Omnipotent Being? We find in *Tully* (*de divin. lib. 1.*) That the Romans, even in their Heathen worship, commanded the people, *ut in rebus divinis, quæ publicè fierent, faverent linguis.* That in all publick Oblations to the Gods, they should take care to keep awful silence; and not suffer noise to drown devotion, as if God were their familiar associate. How disproportionate then, must the prodigious brawlings, and wild actions, and fantastick intermixtures of the highest elevations and lowest cadencies of mens voices in continued prayer, be to the Majesty of that Being, whom they, at the same time, pretend both to reverence and adore? Such deportment indeed, for men that have a design upon the people,

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ple, may suit and endear such Constitutions, as, without consulting their understandings at all, may be pleased with such percussions upon their Nerves, and make them just ready for a battel: It may well enough suit with the hidden designs of aspiring men, who would advance themselves, in the concept of the multitude, to the wisdom and renown of immortal Gods, and then exhibit their Ordinances in Thunder and Lightning, to frighten the people into a stricter observation: and therefore may proclaim the subtilty of those, who love Reformation, when 'tis ushered in by Rebellion, and are of no Religion, but such as is introduced by force of Arms. This was a successful way of enterprize to those that knock'd down a true Religion, with the butt end of what was false; and, as if they had been Gods, they thundered first with Powder and Bullet, before they gave forth their Laws, and did not publish them to the people, till they were written with the points of their Swords dipp'd in blood. But however such things might advantage a Cause, that could not be managed, but in a strange and new habit of
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Religion; yet certain it is, that a rude and boisterous worshipping of the Deity, can no way comport with the humility of those, who know the distance betwixt their Maker and themselves, and are desirous to fear him here, that so they may enjoy him hereafter. And can any thing be more inconsistent with right reason, than willingly to admit the publick Offices of the Desk and Pulpit, to be performed with a more idle and confident deportment, than the lightest and most ridiculous actions of a Stage? To see a man, who pretends to incline God by his petitions to favour him, or persuade men by his arguments and reasons, to command the one, or hector the other, will cause the spectator easily to conclude, that his passion will sooner disturb himself, than his prayer or reason persuade another. 'Tis true, indeed, that such wild deportment and imperious language to some persons, apt to be frightened with extravagant behaviour, or loud noises, may prove a method fit to make some strange impressions; and the suitableness of a mournful complexion, or an affected tone, with phrases uttered, that
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make a grateful percussio[n] on the Nerves of those, who, having melancholy constitutions, are of mournful aspects, may appear pleasant, though it heightens their distemper. And others may conclude a boisterous behaviour, when it is accompanied with strong lungs, to be the fruits of a well managed zeal, and great signs of grace and devotion: yet all this may be nothing but design; because God may appear in a *still voice*, as well as in *thunder and lightning*: and amongst men of all persuasions, there are hypocritical, and mimical, representations of these things. Nay, Satan himself, who, for his own ends, can play the Ape, by way of imitation, in divine affairs, can be as potent in a Foxes case to deceive the simple, as he is formidable in a Lyons skin, to terrifie those that are more stout and daring: And certain it is, that he deceives more dangerously, under the Fleece of a silly Lamb, than when he spreads the Talons of an Ospray: and we ought to have the greater caution, when he appears like an Angel of light, than when he becomes visible by his own complection. The worst men may, sometimes,

times, be the most severe reprovers of Sin and Vice, who yet design nothing less than amendment in themselves : As that wicked Spirit, who wrought wonders by *Priscilla*, that blasphemous *Montanist*, was, in appearance, so pious, that he would frequently rebuke open faults, *ut videretur corrector vitiorum*, that he might seem to be a corrector of vices. But, as for those drailing tones, and long tail'd expressions, which are so bewitching to mournful tempers ; They being, usually, either the effects of craft, or the products of melancholy dispositions, though vulgarly deem'd the gifts of God, and fruits growing from the operation of the Spirit ; Yet there cannot be a greater enemy to the main Doctrines, and practice of Christianity, nor to the peace of men, professing that Religion, than a dull and melancholy temper of mind. For this is as formidable an adversary to our Religion, as it was in *Judea*, to the gift of Prophecy ; and so much did it interfere with that there, as to cause even a proverbial Speech ; That the *Holy Spirit* never resides in a sorrowful man. Besides, in all these things, which, if we retire, become

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the objects of our senses, a good humorist may as well act as they who pretend to the most magnified inspiration. And as the *Swan* was never used in Sacrifices under the Law ; So will an Hypocrite (though he is never so subtil) be rejected by God, in the service of the Gospel ; Because, like the *Swan*, under the white plumes, and pleasant voice, their lies hidden a black Skin. But notwithstanding this, the Hypocrite, in a seeming Zeal, and Devotion, may frequently exceed, in external sweat, and gesture too, him that is most serious and cordial in his prayers ; Though, when we see so much smoke, we easily perceive that the flame does not ascend. For although art may vye with nature itself, and the cunning Hypocrite, who trades in Religion, may enable himself, or his customers may inform him, how he may outdo the rational acts of true devotion, so as to entrap the multitude ; yet in this the cheat will be plainly discovered, and his design will be written in open characters on the matter he utters, with a fervency beyond the modesty of devotion ; and appear also to the most vulgar eye, if the head in which it is fix'd, is considerate.

rate. *Themistocles* was discerned to be no right *Athenian*, even by a plain and simple woman of the City, because the great care he had in the pronunciation of his words, caused her to perceive, that he affected, only, but had not, the proper phrase, and accents, of *Athens*. And, indeed, unless extempore men worship one God, and we another, it will not be either a formal head, exactly adorned, nor a grave aspect, nor either hard or soft expressions, although attended with an affected tone, ; No, nor Zeal transported into Frenzy, and madness, nor all the effects of subtilty, or art, or the easie endowments even of nature it self, that can be able to recommend our prayers to that God, *who searcheth the hearts, and trieth the reins of the children of men* ; for he (if we have true notions of him) loves an honest and good mind, beyond either the complements of the Formalist, or the cheats of the Hypocrite ; we know that the *Pharisees* were excellent scouers of the outside of themselves, and very prying into the inside of others ; that they could make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, when yet their own inward parts, were full of

ravening; and all manner of wickedness: These could be very precise, and strict in smaller matters, to the *paying tyth of mint, and rue, and all manner of herbs*; but passed over judgement, and the love of God, (Luke 11.). And the Epicures, notwithstanding the luxury, and irregularity of their lives, could speak of God, in the publick Schools of *Athens*, with greater reverence than any other Sect of Philosophers: And yet we find in *Tully*, at the latter end of his first Book, *de Naturâ Deorum*, that, *Epicurus retollit, oratione relinquit Deos*: That he could allow those Gods in his Speeches, which, in reality, he denied. And, whilst there is such a thing as falshood in the world, and men may make profession with their tongues, of what their minds do not heartily assent to; There can be no certain and infallible judgement made from wordy expressions, or external gestures, nor yet from seeming transports of devotion. *Tacitus* informs us, that the Malecontents in *Galba's* time, *tristitiam simulabant propiores contumacia*. That they counterfeited sorrow, when their minds were stubborn: And although many men, among our selves, may have

have steady brows, and fixed eyes, and walk with a grave and upright deportment ; yet privacy may discover to one who observantly converses with them, that they are either empty, or else frothy and vain. For too many are guilty of that fault, which *Cicero* pretends against *Verres*. *Frontem atque oculos mentiri*. Their foreheads, and their eyes, speak falsehoods. Boldness is a common shelter to these things ; and confidence is almost characteristical to those that are adversaries to our Church prayers, so great, and large, that 'tis a rare thing to find modesty enough to hold the tongues of those, who have been apparently baffled ; much less, to make their faces blush, when their hands were all fineer'd with blood, nay, so much as to ascend to the Throne with Swords, and Staves ; (not to mention what they took thence, and most barbarously butchered) ; and, after all, an *Hue and Cry*, is perpetually sent out after their repentance, and yet they hide it, that it cannot be found. But instead of an acknowledgement of their own guilt ; they will, in despite of the experience of mankind, averr their piety to exceed

the Religion of other men, and from their fondness to themselves, infer the kindness of God to them. Like that bloody and cruel Tyrant *Domitian*, who painted *Jupiter* in the Market place, with pleasant colours, and himself in his bosom, though he should have been represented trodden under his feet. *Strabo*, indeed, tells us, that it is impossible to persuade women, and the promiscuous multitude, to Religion, by mere reason, and dry Philosophy, but that for this, there is need of Superstition, and this cannot be advanced without Fables, and Wonders, (*Geor. lib. 1.*) Yet the great God, whom all Christians pretend to adore, never ushered in his Religion into the World, but by such Miracles as were real, and true : But when such a Religion as ours is, becomes planted, and sufficiently by Miracles, (beyond all the abilities of natural Causes, that we are acquainted with) proved to be Divine ; the rational account that may be given of it, (it no wise contradicting natural Religion) will sufficiently inforce its esteem, and exercise, without the addition of any new juggles or devices of our own. And there-

therefore, the *Romans*, that the Religion which they embraced, though false in its self, might neither suffer by flattery, or fraud, when the *Soothsayers* increased so fast in their City, made an Order of Senate, that none but Gentlemen should practise these matters, lest so exalted, and Divine an art, should be degraded from the Majesty of Religion, to a baser trade of fraud, and couzenage, (As *Tully* tells us in his first Book of *Divinat.*). And indeed it holds good, and rational, under the profession of a true Religion, more than it could possibly under a false; For where, as in the daies of *Jeroboam*, the Priesthood is formed out of the meanest of the people, they will not scruple to carry wisps of Hay, to feed Calves at *Dan*, and *Bethel*. But farther, and besides all this, we now find Secular interest a most prevailing principle in the minds of men; and therefore is it, that, upon a late, and more particular, scrutiny, we find mens particular Religion, stoop to their own personal advantages; and the rites and devotions which they ought to exercise in the true profession, to be countermanded, when enjoyn'd by lawful Authority,

by the profit which attends mens particular Trades, and occupations : As if because *Demetrius*, and others, made silver Shrines for *Diana*, it must presently be concluded, *that great is Diana of the Ephesians*. This is the main reason, why our Sectaries are like the Astrologers at *Rome*, always banished, and yet ever here : For interest, and advantage, quickly turn prudence into subtilty, and this as soon will erect a fortress to defend it self, if it does not, also, expel honesty out of its neighbourhood. Nay, this private interest of Honour, and Wealth, too frequently rules abundance of men in the making Laws, submitting to them, and executing them too, even against all right, and publick advantage. This we find to have been formerly at *Rome*; For though there was sufficient and notorious evidence, that the Books, found by *Petilius* in *Numa's* grave, were certainly his ; Yet because they were adjudged, by the Senate, to be contrary to the present customs and Laws of the City, and consequently might tell tales, and make discoveries, and lay that common, which was then inclosed ; they were, without any farther

ther enquiry, sentenced to be burnt. And thus we may, without uncharitableness, suppose that many deal with Religion: Though they are convinced, (or else, dreading the evidence, will not have patience to attend the conclusion of an argument,) that what our Church professes, and enjoins, is naked truth; Yet because either its embracement, or defence, may at present, or succeeding times, lay them open to some temporal troubles, or inconveniences, they will neither be honest to God, nor *Baal*; but trim betwixt both, keeping their own Boat upright, let the tide, and the waves, beat which way they will; And by another Metaphor, cut with whiskers, or shave all off; and either they halt betwixt two Opinions, or if they profess one, they will leave it when a storm ariseth, and follow our blessed Lord himself, only, whilst the loaves last, but desert him, if he once wants bread. In an instance hinted at a little before, when Idolatry was like to fall at *Ephesus*, (and then the Images could not stand) by the powerful Preaching of *St. Paul*; the people began to entertain an opinion, *that they were no gods, which*
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were made with hands: But at last, *Demetrius*, a City Orator, (and, for ought I know, Master of his Company) assembled all his Crafts-men together, and informs them that their livelihood would be in danger, and their trade set at nought, if such Doctrine as Christianity should be prevalent among them: As soon, therefore, as they understood that, in the concernment of their Religion, their trade was involved, by which they were to make out their fortunes in this World; and that the Image of *Diana* was that which supported them; they quickly gave a check to their own hesitations in matter of Religion; the grandeur of *Diana* was presently concerned; they grew full of wrath for what they had a favourable opinion of, and cried out, with the largest throat they could make, even for the full space of two hours, *Great is Diana of the Ephesians* (*Acts 19*). So wonderfully prevalent is the fence of gain (as if it were the only godliness) for, or against, any Religion in the World, among men who only value the subtilty of the Serpent, but do not regard the innocence of the Dove. And
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now, upon the view of this, can any of us secure our selves, that they who are enemies to the Church of *England*, whatever friendship there may be among themselves, do not share in this thing? Can we conclude, that they exalt not Schism for wealth, or reputation? Or, upon any equilibrious or probable arguments, so much as hope that they adhere to a party, where all profess the same faith, without some respects and designs that are far different from the Christian Religion, and Protestant interest? If not; Then, amongst *English* men, that bid defiance to the Pope, and much more in those who are not so much as Christians at large, 'tis neither the external deportments of men, their fluency of language, nor any of their seeming zeal, or raptures, that can evidence to us that their worship is such as becomes the glory or greatness of the Deity, or agreeable to the reason of mankind; since gain will force men to appear godly in spite of all our teeth; and though they are bit never so severely, if they please, they will run on still, till ye do not only catch them, but hold them fast.

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But let us leave the shell, and pick out the kernel; If we can find any in such a Controversie as this, and a Maggor is not got into the Nut: Let us travel from the Porch to the Temple, and view both their Sacrifice, and Altar, (if that word be not prophane) and see well whether the fire heats parallel to the blaze it makes among them. Let us look into the Modes, by which our Brethren-adversaries make their addressees to Almighty God, and judge whether their prayers, or deportment is suitable to that respect which, in solemn invocations, is rationally due to the Divine Majesty, and that infinite Being, whom Christian men pretend to adore?

The usual way of the Native Protestants of *England*, who Dissent from the Liturgy, and Church Established in this Nation by Law, among us, is to pray to God without premeditation, in relation unto words, and, as some affirm, matter too, expecting, in this, assistances from the Spirit of God, notwithstanding all their rational faculties, and external helps, (though 'tis no way promised in this sence) and so they cannot ponder before-hand, what is fitting

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to be offered to their Maker. Now can it possibly be consistent with the greatness of that power, which disposes and confers the Crowns, and Scepters, of this lower World, to admit such addressees, which must be indigested, and therefore rude? If these men, themselves, were to petition any Earthly Prince, for either a pardon, or place of advantage, they would very well consider both the matter, and the form; that neither inconvenience, or absurdity, might be mixed with the one, nor rudeness, or too much familiarity, enter into the composition of the other: Nay, whosoever are chosen to present it, are usually persons, not only of integrity, but prudence too; not only such as may be acceptable to the Prince, but they who have a deportment suitable to Majesty; that can demean themselves with such humility, and lowliness, accompanied with a correspondent desire; not only to represent the grievance of the petitioners, but their affection too, signifying the testimonies of the seriousness of their minds, by the external gravity, and submission expressed in the gestures, and actions, of their bodies. And can
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any think that the great God, when we make Religious addressees to him, can be well pleas'd with what we account an affront to men, since he is a rational, living, and infinite Being? 'Tis true, indeed, we have found some in the world, who anciently worshipp'd *Mercury* by railing, and *Hercules*, by throwing stones at him: But surely, the God whom Christians pretend to serve, is neither deaf, that he cannot hear, nor, because he is strong, is he become insensible. Reverence, and a most awful fear, are suitable ornaments for him to wear, who pretends to approach the Almighty, to adore him; for he is able to blast us in a moment, and destroy us with a word, and scatter abroad dust and ashes, with the breath of his nostrils; and can, when he pleases, cause an hasty word uttered before him, to choak the person who is bold to speak it; nay, without pointing the arrow backward, cause either it self to perish upon the string, or him that is shooting it, to drop down dead before him: And is this God, with a ruder confidence, to be address'd to? The *Egyptian* Gods were figured with their fingers in their mouths, to command

mand awe, and forbid clamours, to those who came nigh to worship them : And shall the true, sensible, and living Being, who is infinite in all glorious perfections, be more confidently dealt with, by those, who pretend to a pure worship, than the deportment of men durst testifie before those, who indeed were no Gods ? Shall the common nature and reason of men, in a land of darkness, give rules to render devotion strict ; and no limits be imposed to the rudeness of Gods creatures, in a land of light ? When a society of men agree together to desire any boon, or favour, from one that is their superiour on Earth ; how cautious are they in wording their Address ? How do they chuse such, as they are able to confide in, to draw it up ? With what a critical seriousness, and grave consideration, is it afterwards review'd by the whole body ? How strict are they in the most minute circumstances ? And, when they have passed it through many objections, and amendments ; how choice are they in pitching upon one, that has a good tongue, a quick apprehension, and is most powerful both in Argument, and Rhetorick, to present it

it in writing ; and, if need be, to speak in relation to the heads of it ? And shall the great God of all the World, in comparison to whom the tallest Cedars are but shrubs ; who can drive all mankind before him, like dust before a storm ; who can cause Kings, and Emperors too, to vail their Crowns, and lay their Scepters at his feet : Shall this infinite Majesty be address'd to so carelessly, and inconsiderately, as if he were our familiar Companion ? Cannot he discharge the Artillery of Heaven, and cause his Lightning to consume the World, or the voice of his Thunder, to make us afraid ? Is not he able to recall our breath in as short a moment, as that, in which he first gave us life, and make us a prey to rottenness, and Vermin ? The great Maker, and Preserver of the World, is not, certainly, so small a thing, as the hasty and rude devotions of some men might cause others to believe that he is. Nay, that we may not conjecture, that because he needs not adoration, and homage from any, even his most rational creatures ; because he wants nothing to render him eternally happy, neither the outward respect of the bodies of
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men, nor their internal acts of reverence, and devotion, to make additions to his own glory, he neither regards the one, nor minds the other : See himself attesting his own Dignity, and declaring what he expects from those, who being the workmanship of his hands, he has caused, by his favour, to become related to him ; and rebuking those Priests, that were too bold either with himself, or such things, as were dedicated to his Service. *A Son* (saies he) *honoureth his Father, and a Servant his Master ; If then I am a Father, where is mine honour, and if I be a Master, where is my fear, unto you O Priests that despise my name ? And when they confidently ask, wherein have we despised it ? His answer is ; Ye offer polluted bread upon mine Altar, and say, that the Table of the Lord is contemptible ; And for that they offered the blind, and the sick, and the lame ; Offer it now* (saies he) *to thy Governour ; will he be pleased with thee, or accept thy person ?* (first Chap. of Malac.). *That lofty one who inhabiteth Eternity, whose we are, and whom we serve, will not accept of such services to himself, as are not worthy enough to be given to*
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men. And how, indeed, is it possible that he can, either in justice, or honor ? Unless he should relax the reins of Government, and cast things into an eternal confusion, by a voluntary departure from his own Glory, which yet, he has resolved not to give to another. But, yet, omitting other Arguments ; if our own reason, when divorc'd from passion, will conclude that we ought to pay deference to others, either distinct from, or of the same natures, with our selves, suitable to that dignity they obtain in the universe, or the several degrees that some of our own species are justly advanced and exalted to, by any regular and commanded motion ; and if we are, when we depart not from our own Inferences, obliged to be cautious in our deportment to other men, rendring honour, to whom honour is due ; Certainly, if we have a true notion of the Deity ; and that the God whom we worship, is self-existent, and includes all possible perfection ; There is much more reason, that we should be very circumspect about the actions, and homage, which we devote to him. The Apostle informs us, that the worship
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that is expected under the Gospel, must be such as comports with the principles of right reason ; and therefore he does exhort, when he might have commanded, and beseech the *Romans*, when he might have Canonically injoin'd them : *I beseech you, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living Sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable Service,* (Rom. 12. 1.). And as he draws an Argument for such an invitation from the mercies of God, in this place ; So he infers, in another, *from the price of our redemption, that we must glorifie God in our bodies, and our Spirits, which are his.* (1 Cor. 6. 20.). And, since both were Created, and Redeemed by him, 'tis but equal, that he should have the Services of both ; And, because we, with faith, and hope, expect that future Glory, should as well reward our Bodies, as our Souls ; it is but reasonable, that both should join in the discharge of those duties , which our Creator, and Redeemer too, has commanded for us ; not only as testimonies of our gratitude for all ; but as conditions too, to qualify us for the possessions of Eternal life, and prepare us both to enjoy, and relish

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the Glorious and everlasting refreshments above, which are only to be had in such a gracious, and transporting presence, as the great God, in his Glorious Trinity makes, accompanied with his trains of Angels, and the Spirits of just men made perfect.

C H A P.

C H A P. XII.

NOW, from all the foregoing Discourse at large, we may, without prejudice, or severity, charge our Brethren, who, upon the false pretence of greater Reformation, separate from us, and become our Adversaries, with these following particulars, in which they are either defective in, or over-do those rational and Divine acts of worship to God, which, discharging our Tribute, and Homage to him, *become a service acceptable, and well pleasing*; Whilst in the mean time these wilful, or at least ignorant, Separatists pretend still, with the greatest confidence, to be the best, if not the only, *worshippers in Spirit, and in truth*: But this assertion is vain and fond.

Because (*First,*) They usually separate what the great God has joined, and accepts, together; Nor do they worship him (or at least they account it not necessary) *with their outward man,*

as well as with the hidden man of the heart. 'Tis true, indeed, bodily worship profiteth little, yet something it does ; but nothing at all, when it is divorc'd from the intention and affections of the mind ; because it is a perfect demonstration of Hypocrisie, which is very odious both to God, and man ; But yet, men cannot well pretend the devotion of their minds, (especially so as to convince others) when it is not accompanied with humble and suitable deportments of their bodies. For, if there were no regard to be had to mens bodily gestures, when they pretend to pay homage, and worship to God ; then if we argue like men that have reasonable souls given them, to discern betwixt good, and evil, it must be, because our Maker, knowing the designs of our hearts, does not expect external demonstrations, of what he concludes to be lodged within us : But then we need no other pains to address our selves, but only to raise our conceptions to the strongest, and most fixed thoughts ; nimble apprehensions would be enough to compose a prayer, and it would be utterance sufficient, if we did but only temper our lips,
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cough, and raise flegm into our throats, nay, without any action of our bodies at all, if our prayer were composed, or rather intended within our selves, without the delivery of our own inventions, or any signification of the purports of our hearts, by the language of our tongues : And, if this were right, Women themselves might bring forth too, without any travail, or pains to them, if they could but keep their own counsel. But, alas ! such notions as these, in those prayers which are in common, do not signifie so much as a man that gapes, when he ought to speak. For even words in prayer, serve only to utter our minds, and are no more than an external sign, and representation of what we had, before, inwardly conceived ; And since this is by all men, of sence, accounted to be a service acceptable to God, why may he not receive the signatures, and impressions of our souls, by any other corporal demonstration ? Why cannot the lifting up of our hands to our mouths, and kissing them, as in old time, be proper adoration ? Why cannot inclining our heads, or bowing our bodies, still continue to be a certain to-

ken of reverence, and submission, and of worship too? Why cannot kneeling, or prostration upon the ground, Religiously signifie, the humility, devotion, and the most profound lowliness of our minds? Especially, since 'tis as old as *David to worship, and fall down, and to kneel also before the Lord our Maker.* But if such reasoning may not be admitted by those, who account all reason carnal, from the experience of their own, especially when it contradicts themselves; If men can at all be brought to themselves; nay, but so far as not to think, that *Adams Fall*, has not beaten out the brains of his Posterity: If we approvedly use words in our devotions to God, although he knows our conceived petitions, when no expressions are uttered by our mouths, discerning our thoughts a far off; Nor do I desire, that even this plain position, may be precarious, or granted by Adversaries without proof, since if they will but yield God to be a Spirit, they may easily conjecture that he can be more quickly sensible of the thoughts of our souls, (especially if they account him to be infinite too) by a certain near and prying intuition, the mode

mode of which is not so adapted to our apprehensions; than having not the organs of sense, by which we understand and express things, he can be said, in a literal sense, to hear our prayers. But, for all this, in publick prayers we, having others to join with us, as we use words to signify our petitions, which express the sentiments of our minds; So do we also by habits, and gestures, represent our devotions, and conceptions to others, to raise their affections in proportion to our own, that they, by all means possible, understanding what we are about, may be inclined to assent, and say *Amen*, and be prevailed on to frame themselves into the same resemblance of mind, and body, that there may not only be an unity in our common worship, but Uniformity too. And if these other signs, besides words, in the postures of our bodies, or both in conjunction, may effectually conduce to the same end, which is the raising, and signifying our devotion; I see no reason why the actions of other members of our bodies, besides the articulate motion of our tongues, that notoriously declare profound humility, and present
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our devotions, and signifie in the eyes of all the world, (unless it be to those, who are resolved to shut them in their prayers, to avoid the Argument) our homage to, and dependance on, God, should not be used, in worshipping our Maker, as well as words, which an absolute necessity of understanding one another, has improved, and made copious by custom, and art, and a long time since were rendered fashionable in the world, as being more ready than other signs, and representations from any different members of the body; For these are also the action, and labour of the tongue, and lips. It will appear to all men that, in prayer, and devotion, the body ought to accompany the mind; they being such intimate and united friends, that both make but one man; because any that in private address themselves to God, when they are in different appartments from one another, and when they enter into their Closets, and are still, if they pray with any earnestness, and affection, being moved to it, by the consideration of that great God, to whom they address, their own meanness when compared to him, or the absolute necessity
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of obtaining those things w^{ch} they petition for, they express their minds with such fervor, and humility, as affect their bodies, and cast them into postures, that customarily signifie, and represent these things to other men. However, methinks, they who, dissenting from the Service of our Church, are advanced to be the mouth of others, ought, in justice, to declaim for the worship of mens bodies, since, commonly, the motions and activity of their bodies in all, even their publick, devotions, is that which more recommends them to their people, than the sense of their petitions, or the decency of the words, by which they express it. But let us argue this thing fairly with our selves; and then can any man, who has stript himself of prejudice, and prepossessions in his enquiries about the worship of his Maker, do otherwise than conclude, that we nearer arrive at the perfection of that homage due to him, by how much the more we employ our bodies in decent expressions of gravity, humility, and apt affection, to declare the inward intention of our minds, which are full of all vigor, and fervent desire, and the most awful thoughts
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of that great Majesty whom we adore? For this deportment gives to God a whole Sacrifice; when others, who, in their prayers, only hide their minds in their bodies, as if they were confined, as the Heathen Gods, to an immovable, and stiff Statue; separating the inward actions of their souls, from any correspondent gestures of their bodies, if they worship God at all, (which they seem not very fond to declare): Yet they devote only half of themselves, and honor him in such a manner as other men can neither see nor know, unless men had Casements in their Breasts, that being opened, others might look into them. But that the worship of mens bodies ought to accompany the devotions of their minds, is so apparent from Gods Injunctions under the Law, that it cannot admit of any contradiction: And if we argue for it, under the establishment in the Gospel, from those Commands we find in the Law, we have nothing returned, but that the *Jews* were a dull and stupid people, in comparison to our selves; and men thus boast, instead of having much cause of triumph. For, notwithstanding all the

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Investives we have heard against the pitiful carnality and dulness of the *Jews*, it appears too often, to our great loss, that they are as witty and more cunning than our selves: We, indeed, having received helps and advantages by the Gospel, and a greater proportion of the Spirit of Christ, in whom they refused to believe, are better instructed in the methods of a more spiritual Religion, than they could be under the Law. But, yet, what was then established, which reason enforced, being agreeable to the natures of mankind, that was never yet repeated under the Gospel, nor ever can; I may confidently affirm, may remain still without any check or controul for using it. And therefore I cannot come to any damage in affirming, that the worship of mens bodies, in all their publick addresses unto God, ought to accompany that of their minds, till better arguments are brought against it, than any which I have yet heard or seen. 'Tis true, indeed, our Saviour acquaints the woman of *Samaria*, that the hour cometh, and now is, when those who are of the true Christian Church shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth,
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because he seeks such to worship him,
 (*John 4. 23.*) Yet all this, though
 when 'tis interpreted according to the
 opinions of some men, makes others
 stagger, that are so weak, as to desert
 their reason, that they may become wise;
 and go out of themselves to possess
 their souls; and forsake the conduct
 of their own understandings, guided
 by the rules of Gods Word, that they
 may be frighted into the follies of
 others. All this, I say, may, when
 justly enlarged on, rebuke Schism, or
 Idolatry, or false worship: But this
 Text cannot authorize any detraction
 from external decency in the service of
 God, nor abate from those orderly
 Rites and Ceremonies, that promote
 Uniformity in the worship of him, or
 tend to the fixation and establishment
 of true Religion, under the Gospel;
 nor such circumstances of devotion,
 which are not in particular, and di-
 rectly abolished by the Messiah, having
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 of him to come. If any of that ex-
 ternal worship of our bodies were of
 this kind which is enjoined by our
 Christian Superiors, our practice would
 contradict our faith, and deny Christ
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to be come in the flesh, and justifie the *Jews* in the expectation of a Messiah. But, the truth is, the conference betwixt our Saviour, and the woman of *Samaria*, is so far from prohibiting publick places of worship, or external gestures of our bodies in devotion adapted to the inward reverence of our minds; that it establishes a spiritual, rational, and Evangelical worship, in opposition to the *Mosaick* Constitutions, and the *Samaritan* Schism, and Idolatry too; and briefly declares, that the Christian Religion was now to be established, to abolish all other that were in the world, that mankind being united in one faith and hope, and consenting in one common principle, and worshipping God through the mediation of their Redeemer, having lived in this world, with true devotion to the God that made them, and in charity and peace among themselves, might at last dye with comfort within their own breasts, and then enter into the joy of their Lord. But if all this were largely controverted to a victory, what shall we think of that Text of *Solomon*, when he delivers points of a moral and perpetual establishment, and
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of an universal concernment to mankind? (*Eccles. 5. 1.*) *Keep thy foot when thou comest into the Sanctuary of the Lord, &c.* It was an usual custom amongst the *Jews*, according to the fashion of those Eastern Countreys, to signifie their reverence in a sacred place, by putting off their Sandals, before they entered, that they might not prophane, or, which is all one, render common, by a defilement, an holy place; or what was separated from vulgar use, to such as was sacred, and related unto God. From whence, with reference to the reason of the thing, was that Injunction, more ancient than this Text, *Pull off thy shoes from off thy feet; for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground, (Exod. 3. 5.)* The place being, before, mean and inconsiderable; a toft of ground, on which bushes grew; yet because God consecrated it by his own presence, making it holy for Divine Offices, to give *Moses* his Commission, and to declare his Law; therefore the signs of reverence were to be used there, and external demonstrations of devotion to be exhibited. Now this particular action, of making bare the feet, being
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an outward testimony of respect in those Countreys where this was commanded ; it sufficiently instructs all subsequent posterities of men, that external signs of humility and submission, must be given in the service of the Deity, especially such, in which we pretend, to converse with him ; and in those places that are devoted to his honour. And since divers Countreys use distinct modes of reverence and respect, according to their customary signification and acceptance ; as the inhabitants of *Japan* salute, by pulling off the Shoo, when we do the same by pulling off our Hats, and uncovering our Heads ; we may therefore fairly conclude, that if *Solomon*, in the fore-cited Text, had spoken to persons used to our Customs, and subject to the Constitutions of our Nation ; he would have said, *Pull off thy Hat when thou goest to the house of God, and be more ready to hear, than to give the sacrifice of fools : for they consider not, that they do evil.* And then the inference from this will be, That we ought, in all places, dedicated to God, on which his Name and Honour are inscribed, where we pretend to offer our Christian Sa-
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crifice, to testify the inward devotion of our minds, by the outward behaviour and deportment of our bodies. And this will justify the bowing our Necks, by a reverent inclination, the bending our Knees, or an erected posture of our bodies, when our supplications and prayers may require the one, or our praises the other. Thus when *Ezra* had mourned for that affinity which the *Jews* had contracted with Strangers, by mingling Gods heritage with the people of the Land, contrary to the Injunctions of him who was their Divine King, and Supreme Legislator, he not only *rended his own garment, and tore his mantle, and pluck'd off the hair of his head*, to represent the sorrow and lamentation of his mind, by such outward signatures and actions of his body; but the guilt, and the punishment which he might fear would attend it, caused him to *fall down upon his knees, and spread out his hands unto the Lord his God, (Ezra 9. 5.)* Such demonstrative, symbolical, and significant actions of his body, accompanied the lowly humility of his mind, when he made his afflicting confession to his Maker. Thus we find, also, that when
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the most impious and prophane Decree was signed by *Darius*, as full of cruelty, as it was of irreligion, *That whoſoever asked any petition from God or man, excepting only from this King himſelf, for the ſpace of thirty dayes, he ſhould be caſt into the Den of Lions: Daniel, notwithstanding, fell upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks to his God, as he did before the decree was paſſ'd, (Dan. 6. 10.)* Nay, we have not only Old Teſtament examples for joyning the worſhip of our bodies with our ſouls, and by outward geſtures ſignifying the inward devotion of our minds: but we find in the New Teſtament too (beſides our Saviours kneelings, proſtrations, and liſting up his eyes and hands to Heaven, mentioned with other Canonical patterns, before, in this Diſcourſe) that *S. Paul* when he prayed, that the *Ephesians* might have courage and ſtrength to perſevere in the profeſſion, and heroick duties, of Chriſtianity, notwithstanding the threats, and perſecutions, of their adverſaries, *bowed his knees unto the Father of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, (Eph. 3. 14.)* He might, ſurely, have petitioned God for the ſame bleſſings,

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when, for ought we know, he was in private, by himself, without any such external ceremony, which some men so disregard in publick, where the influence which our deportment has on others, becomes the great argument for its necessity. But nature it self would have provoked him to this; which men forsake, when they bid defiance to such outward testimonies of respect: As if God, because he has no bodily eyes, can neither see nor understand. But who is the man that is truly devout, and does not chuse his Religion, as it best suits with his secular advantages, that can look upon the Levites under the Law, standing up to bless the Lord their God, and calling upon others, to put themselves into the same decency of posture, and when all were uniform, crying out, with a loud voice, *Blessed be thy glorious Name, which is exalted above all blessing and praise*, (*Nehem. 9. 5.*); and yet, under the larger blessings of the Gospel, sit fast, and refuse to stand up at the *Gloria Patri*, and other Hymns of the Christian Church; or who could have seen the Primitive Christians laying upon the floor, and knocking

ing their breasts , and fasting themselves almost into Skeletons, wanting little more to dissolve their bodies into dust and ashes, and yet, obstinately conclude, that their zeal transported them beyond their knowledge; and that groans and sighs might more compendiously have expressed their sorrow and repentance : And that 'tis better, now , to have no external demonstrations at all ? But I shall not pursue such arguments any farther ; nor any men, with whom no reason can prevail ; who seem to take such great care for the ease of their bodies, whatever pains their souls must at last endure. From what has been said, it will readily be inferr'd, by all who are inclin'd to piety and devotion, that when we meet with a people, who pretend to worship the Great, and only Supreme, God, and yet deny the signs of reverence and due respect so universally paid by all serious and religious men, we may well conclude, that they do not perform their service and homage with such humility and regard, as must properly be due to so great a Majesty as God is, when their own reason might prompt them to it ;

since it naturally concludes for obsequiousness and ceremony to be due to men, suitable to their worth and grandeur in the world. Nay, will not these very persons themselves, who are so scrupulous in giving bodily worship to God (and so loth to use care in composing Prayers, or to joyn in those that are composed to their hands) when they desire, and expect, kindness from men, use more than ordinary fawning expressions, and bend their bodies into the most obliging postures, to advance their designs, by pretending a large inward respect, which they thus endeavour outwardly to express? And can they really think that the great God ought to have less honour, and regard, when we petition him for the largest Boons, and greatest Kindnesses, that can possibly be bestowed upon the Sons of men, even such as will render them as fully happy as their natures, in perfection, are capable to receive? Let any mans reason judge in this case; And let him make a fair appeal to himself; And, upon a just retirement, and examination of the matter, (if he puts not a bar against his own conviction) he will yield, that a tribute ought to be paid,

paid, by the bodies of men, as well as their souls, unto that infinite Being, which made both : And, consequently, he must condemn the worship of those who, to support their Schism, separate their very souls from their bodies ; Un-man themselves, to ungod the Deity ; Pay more respect to a man on Earth, than to the Supreme Lord of the whole Universe, and crouch to his Footstool, when yet they will not bow to his Throne.

C H A P. XIII.

I Proceed now to a Second Argument, whereby we prove, that those who, under the pretence of greater Reformation, separate from us, whilst they yet live among us, do not pray to God in such a manner, as is suitable to his Attributes, their own dependance on the object of their devotions, and the infinite distance that is betwixt their Maker, and themselves; Because their prayers are, commonly, a very rude indigested heap, rashly conceived, and uttered, extempore; Fraught too frequently with impertinency and nonsense; And hast, too often, becomes the cause of blasphemy also. And how, indeed, can it well be otherwise? When their principle, will not give them time to think, nor mind, well, what they utter? So that if, at any time, they sail betwixt these rocks, and dash themselves against neither, the wind, and tide, are their only friends; and their safety is not owing to the
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steeridge of the Pilot, nor to be attributed to their own pains, and skill, when they allow not themselves time to employ either. But, notwithstanding all their pretensions to the Spirit, (of which I shall hint something before I end) which advances their rudeness, into perfect Blasphemy ; If, praying extempore, they are at any time methodical, and faultless; 'tis owing to their good chance, and fortune ; And they have an escape when they have taken no pains at all for it. But when *David* was bartering for the threshing-floor of *Araunah* ; and for Oxen also, for a burnt Sacrifice ; nay, the very wood to kindle the fire ; all which, he might have been presented with for nothing : *David* refused so Royal a gift ; And his reason, as himself expressed it, was, *because he would not offer burnt offerings unto the Lord his God, of that which should cost him nothing,* (2 Sam. 24. & 24.). But, these bold men, with whom, to our sorrow, we have to do, confidently present to Almighty God, that, in which no pains were taken in the composition ; Only a tatling, and talkative Service, stuff'd with little besides gibberish, and impertinency, that
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others who consider what, and to whom they offer it, cannot, without falshood and irreverence, join with them in ; But the halt, and the blind, are their common Sacrifices, and strong lungs the best Altar, on which these oblations are made : Yet all this they think to smother, when they are kindled into passion, and fury, in the obscurity of those phrases, and length of those sentences, in which they pretend to offer their comon supplications unto God ; And they expect the joint consent of a Congregation, to what they never heard of before ; Nor could they understand when it was uttered : For their raptures so muffle up their notions, and both are so mix'd with their petitions, which they wrap in Clouds, and obscure Metaphors, that the meaner sort cannot understand them ; But sigh and groan, they know not why. And the more considering part, that are not blind, have just cause to suspect such Religion, which the Patrons and promoters endeavour with so much care to secure from a more severe and strict examination. All that I admire in it is, how they can be dark at noon-day, and mount out of sight
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on a sudden, and extempore? Unless, whatever their pretensions are to quickness of invention, they study such unusual expressions, designedly, to amuse, but not to inform the judgments of men. As *Cotta* in *Tully*, speaks of *Heraclitus*, (*de nat. Deor. lib. 3.*) *Quæ diceret intelligi noluit*. That he would not have what he said to be understood. But in prayer to God, when 'tis made vocal, men are supposed to declare their wants, and petition for relief; And this, especially when any Community joins in it, ought to be managed with an honest plainness, without any mysterious riddles, or equivocal language, or petitions wrap'd up in mourning Metaphors, as if they were to be buried amongst the Dead; or any other *Coptical* and *Egyptian* expressions; that are difficult to decipher, and much more to be understood; For these are things that as well baffle the minds of the simple, as, too frequently, veil the hypocrisy of him, that makes the oblation; Nay, very often, amuse those of better understanding, so that they are not able, with any judgment, to say *Amen*, at the close of all: Nay it hazards also, and, too frequently, destroys
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that faith which ought to be earnestly contended for, and safely preserved pure, and unspotted. For it's as easie, and indeed attended with less difficulty, to introduce a strange Creed, by using this unbounded liberty in prayer, as it is by an unfifted latitude in preaching; and to insinuate into mens minds, either old or new condemned Heresies, by a frequent repetition of those things that tend to their promotion, or establishment, in our prayers to God; When the souls of those, that join in the devotions, are very intent and open to receive what we say, with greediness and desire; Especially, when men are busied in raising their affections to their utmost height; There 'tis not hard to introduce false Doctrine into the belief of others; Which, like a false story that, by frequent relation, comes at last to be received as true; Not only by the hearers, who are easily imposed on; But he, that tells it, having so often related it, forgetting that he once knew it to be false, at last thinks it to be really true. Nay, in prayer, where a false point in Religion is misted, and wrap'd up in a petition; 'tis affected, and swal.

swallowed with the petition : And more easily digested, than if it were declared in an *Homily*, or Sermon : Because, in hearing Sermons, men employ their judgments, more than their affections : But, in prayer, the affections are usually more busie than their understandings. And that, it is very common with those extempore men, that take upon them to conceive prayer in a Congregation, to insinuate Doctrines in their petitions, is so manifest to all observing persons, who have been present at such meetings, that a person of any judgment at all, may certainly judge of the opinion of the gifted Brother that prayeth, by his Confessions, Petitions, and Thanksgivings to God. And then, where people are led by the authority or examples of those, whom they embrace for their Ministers ; (which in many things the common multitude must, and in most points it is notorious in many of our Separatists) what they use in their prayers, and speeches unto God, must needs obtain a greater reputation with them, than what is only address'd to men : Because they then think their Ministers to be most serious, cautious, and devout

vout too ; This, therefore, was warily, and exceedingly well, provided against (after the extraordinary operations of the Spirit ceased) by the Council at *Laodicea* ; (*Can. 18.*) where the Fathers Assembled injoined their Churches to use *τὴν αὐτὴν λειτουργίαν*, the same Liturgy, or form of prayer, both Morning, and Evening. And in the fifty ninth Canon of the same Council, it was Ordained, that the vulgarly composed *Psalms*, which were the labours of persons, who had not sufficient understanding in these things ; or any Books, that were not Canonical, should not be sung, or read in the Churches : Where also for mens satisfaction against the Papists, in this matter, you may find the Titles, or Names, of those Books, which the Council then received as Canonical. And, in the *Milevitan* Council, (*Can. 12.*) it was Decreed, that those Prayers, and Offices, which were approved by an Assembly, or Council, should only be used ; excluding others, in all their publick Administrations : Lest any thing should, either through inconsideration, or ignorance, be uttered before the people, that might contradict the common faith received,

ceived, and continued among them. And if the Governours of Churches, in those daies, were so Prophetical, and cautious in their Establishments for the present, and transferring the most Holy Christian Religion from their own Age, to the succeeding, so as nothing might be conveyed to Posterity, but what was Orthodox, and of Primitive constitution; And to obviate that extravagant itch of men, (which since we have found increasing into a Scabb) who start in their sleep as if they had gotten Buggs about them, and not only delight themselves in dreams, but greedily impose the notions of their pillows, and the dictates of their disturbed bodies on others; When, upon a more strict enquiry, they may justly attribute all to fancy, and the most unaccountable imagination. If these things are so, our faith, certainly, is not now less precious, nor ought it to be attended with inferiour regard, howsoever it may be despised by the ignorant, or prophane, nor must the Argument of the Council be less valued, but more; Since this Mystery of iniquity, in propagating false Doctrine, together with Schism,

Schism, and Rebellion too, in extempore prayer, is mixed with so much pride in the deliverer, and so easily works upon the melted and ductile judgements of the hearers, that both are deceived, (if they are not a little Knaveish); And, when matters are come to this pass, I can conclude no less, than that, if this be permitted, *the blind will still lead the blind,* till we all fall together *into the Ditch*, when error and mistakes must lead the multitude, and triumphantly captivate the minds of the simple, which every where are the greatest number. But give me leave, farther, to recommend one consideration more, against this extempore, and rash way of publick prayer, which seems to render it unworthy of the Deity, as much as unbecoming men, who yet pretend to consider in all things, but this; And that is because, when men offer to the great Majesty of the Universe, such unconsidered, and unpremeditated devotion, they demonstrate to the world, that there is but little awe and dread upon their minds, of that greatness, and power of him, to whom they make their Addresses; and it must cause strangers to their Religion

on to believe, that the God whom they worship, either does not regard what they offer, or else has given them a large liberty to talk to him in what manner they please, without danger or punishment to any of them: And what a God he will then be concluded to be, is obvious to every ones consideration, and inference. What will an Heathen say in this case, but that if the fear of the Gods introduced Religion into the World; These men, having no fear, banish Religion, and the Gods together. For can that person own the Christians God, who, in publick, evidences so little fear and reverence to him? Can he dread the displeasure of his Prince, or any other person with whom he converses, who values not what he saies to him, neither regarding the method or significancy of his words, or the phraes by which he represents his mind? And can any man, who allows himself time to retire and consider, with nothing but his own thoughts about him, conjecture, or be positive in affirming that any dread of the Divine Majesty has made due impressions upon such minds, which, determining their Spirits to their own
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tongues, speak sudden and unpremeditated language to him ? This must of necessity (very often at least) be rash and unadvised ; Not fit to be presented to so great a God, as all describe *Jehovah* to be ; Because it will very frequently be accompanied with an indecency of phrase, unsoundness of expression, or at least an immethodical, loose, composure. He that does but send a message to another, especially if he is placed some steps above him, will be sure to regard the person of him to whom his errand is directed ; And to mind the main business which he intends : How strangely is he concerned (if it be a matter of importance) to inform his messenger so well in the affair, that, after he has invented the most apt and proper expressions he can think on, that may comport with the quality, nay, the very humour, of the person to whom he sends, and has once delivered them to his own servant, or another ? How frequently will he call him back again, to re-inform him ? That the weight of his business may not suffer diminution, by any light or unbecoming word ; That the messenger may not spoil his design, or the least failure

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in expression, or behaviour, obstruct a compliance? And shall mankind, who are so cautious in secular affairs, have very little, or no, regard to the language in which they utter their wants, and petitions unto the great God, *in whom we live, and move, and have our beings?* From whom, also, we receive the causes of our perpetual subsistence; Nay, when we are begging, from him, such things as are of a most great and everlasting concernment to us, which, if we do not obtain, we are ruin'd, and damn'd to all eternity? In those affairs that we manage with men, (about which we are so very solicitous) the greatest evil that can befall us by any failing, or unfortunate miscarriage, can consist only in a prejudice to our estate, damage to our health, a blot to our reputation, an abatement of our pleasures, and sensual satisfactions; Or, at most, it can but put a period to our lives, and cut the threads which in a few daies would grow rotten and break: All which things if we did escape for that present season, in which we were in danger, we are but for a little space repriev'd; Because they will suddenly perish of themselves;

when the fatal hour snatches us from them, and Death summons us to the great Tribunal. And shall we think it reasonable to be so careful, and big with consideration, in the managery of these low concerns amongst men, that our secular wishes, may obtain their ends; and yet be so vain and negligent in relation to the welfare of our immortal souls, when we petition the great disposer of all things, for such favours, which are so important to us, that, if we fail of their possession, when we come to die, (as certainly, we must) we shall then exchange our abode in this world, for such a torment as is unexpressible, and yet shall never, that we know of, admit of an end, or relaxation? Certainly such men can have little dread of the Divine Majesty, who manage their addresses to this Supreme Being, with such strange rashness, and inconsideration: Especially when their petitions include the great concerns of their own, and others, souls; And are offered to that Almighty power which, alone, is able to grant their desires: This plainly argues, that neither the value of the one, nor the greatness of the other, is much esteemed, or regarded

garded by them. *Be not rash with thy mouth (saies Solomon) and let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God; For God is in heaven, and thou on earth, therefore let thy words be few, (Eccl. 5. 2.).* And if this Text, by a narrow and subtil interpretation, should be restrained to vows only; Yet the reason of the thing will be as prevalent in prayer, when men on Earth, speak to the great God in Heaven; For the distance will be still the same betwixt us; And our contempt, and his revenge, no farther off. We must not, therefore, be rash in this neither; Especially when we reflect on the meanness of our selves, and the greatness of that Majesty to whom we address, and consider well that reverential fear, and awful trembling, that becomes those who worship at his footstool, who has life and death at his disposal: If any thing requires a thoughtful consideration, certainly our prayers may command it from us. Nay, suppose him, who assumes the Title of a Gifted man, to have the quickest conceptions, and the most voluble tongue that any among the numerous race of *Adam*, can be presumed to be endowed

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with ; Yet, considering too that the dispositions, and activity of mens minds are very obsequious to the temperament of their bodies ; That this often alters with the weather, and distempers create such changes in them, that a man who is one day lively and brisk, having his apprehension quick, his conceptions nimble, his judgement clear, and does all things with a sprightly fancy, a ready invention, and utters all with very neat, full, and significant expressions : Yet, perhaps, on the morrow, or oftentimes the same day, this ingenious person is dull and unactive, his faculties do in a manner forsake him, as if his soul were earth'd in some thick matter, or were about to leave its habitation. I say, when we conclude such changes possible, (as all know it by their own experience) we must also yield that, if the time of prayer then happens, rashness, and indecency must frequently attend the matter, method, and phrase too, of those who utter their unpremeditated inventions. But besides, these indispositions of our bodies, which affect our minds ; The cares and accidents, which raise commotions whilst
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we remain in this world, that relate to Oeconomy, Trade, and converses with others, become such as unsettle our minds, and render our thoughts volatile, and unfix'd; So that our souls are not in temper for the matters of Religion; But are raging and foaming, like the Sea in a storm: Our conceptions, and thoughts, become as nimble, as the swiftest arrow; We shoot at one mark, and hit upon another, and hasten from the first object, to a second: And, when we are in this condition, like a running stream, passing from one place to another; How unfit we must be to keep our thoughts, and conceptions to any one Theme, to invent matter, and suitable words to express it in, any person, that will allow himself time to consider, may easily determine, without any assistance from another. Now private prayer, 'tis true, might be defer'd till our troubles and distempers were over; And time, or physick, had reduced our minds to their former consistency, by withdrawing the causes of our indisposition, and distractions: But our publick devotions, being necessarily appointed at certain times, and seasons, cannot admit such prudential

remedies : And then, perhaps, the hours of prayer, in a large Congregation, may come upon our gifted men when they have these troubles, fits, or diseases upon them ; and what will be the consequence of these things, one that has but half an eye may discern ; For the people must either be openly dismiss'd without any publick service at all, or they must offer unto God, what is unfit to be presented unto men, and all must suffer for the personal infirmities of one man. But this does not happen amongst those who use a Form, and Liturgy prepared for them, because a Minister, although something indisposed, may read it before the people ; and though his own mind may be ruffled and discomposed, yet the people, if they please, may be affectionate, and devout. And to confirm this charge in matter of fact ; as I think no man, who, in publick, has used *extempore* and conceived prayer, can deny this observation upon his own experiment ; So I have often, in the late times, and since too, heard persons, who were addicted to this *extempore* delusion, begin their addresses to God Almighty methodically, and well, whilst

whilst they have been informing him what he was, and what they were in themselves ; and yet the prayer, before they have arrived at the conclusion, either through weariness of invention, or some other infirmity, has been fraught not only with weakness, and indiscretions, but, with what seem'd to me to be a great deal worse ; unless mystical nonsense may demonstrate inspiration, and turning in a Parenthesis so long, that the first half sentence was forgotten, and had nothing, in the end, to join to it, becomes an ornament to a petition : Now what awe and dread of the Divine Majesty can possess such men, who present to him such impertinent, uncivil, and nonsensical prayers ? Nay, how suitable such deportment is to the God, whom we all pretend to worship, I willingly leave to all sober and wise men, seriously to consider ; And I hope the Adversaries to our established method of addressing our selves to God in publick, will never so far desert themselves, nor depart from their own Policy and Craft, in provoking any of our Church, to instance in particulars ; Since they well know, that there is more than
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enough evidence to be had. I have heard of a person who was accounted a man of no mean gifts (before Major *Weir's* staffe blossom'd), who, when he had a view of his own prayer, taken by another from his own mouth, on a Fast-day, would not believe, without great difficulty, that he ever uttered it; But when he was convinced by such a testimony, as he could not with any modesty or reason refuse, he was presently abash'd, and, for the future, betook himself to a safer method. However, if men consider what has been said upon this point; that extravagancies of this nature, almost necessary to *extempore* prayers, cannot possibly be suitable to the Great God, nor any way comport with his Nature, and Attributes, who is a Being Infinite in Glory and Perfection; The meanest person, and the lowest capacity, may reasonably determine, and, without a prompter, easily judge in this affair.

C H A P.

C H A P. XIV.

I Shall now go on to a third Argument against the prayers of the Separatists, as being unfuitable to the Nature of God, their own dependance on him whom they adore, and the infinite disproportion betwixt the Deity and themselves ; Because they are, frequently, fill'd with Tautologies, and vain repetitions. And the matter of fact cannot be questioned by any that have been strict, or loose, observers of those crude and indigested prayers, which have proceeded from the mouths of these *extempore* devotionists, who have undertaken thus to be the mouths of others, what ever forms they might reserve for themselves. But our blessed Saviour gives a most grave and serious caution to those who are admitted to present homage, and worship to the great God, who is the Father of us all : *When ye pray (saies he) use not vain repetitions, as the Hea-*
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then do, (Matth. 6. 7.) And though Christ might speak *Syriack* at the delivery ; yet the Evangelist, from whom we receive the prohibition, whose language becomes the Original unto us, by whom also our Saviours words and actions are conveyed to posterity, having written in *Greek* ; we must understand the meaning of what is, in the Text, forbidden, either by what is translated *vain repetitions*, or from the custom of those Heathens , who are said to use them. The word used by the Evangelist, is βασιλογῶ : Πεσουχόμενοι, ὃ μὴ βασιλογήσητε ; *When ye pray, do not speak as Battus did* ; Now, though *Suidas* explains it by πολυλογία, *speaking much* ; yet, the Text, even in the prime signification of the word , prohibits all frequent repetitions of the same sense and language ; as one *Battus* did, from whose name, part of the compounded Verb is taken and translated into the Text, who made long Hymns full of Tautologies , he being a very idle and empty Poet. As to what *Maldonate* mentions of another of the same name, who had an hesitation, or stammering, in his speech, delivering such thick and swift language,

language, that it was difficult to understand him; this could be no cause of the prohibition of our Saviour: For, this, being only a natural infirmity, and not any careless, or affected, extravagance, cannot be the foundation of this caution: and it is rejected by the Jesuit himself. Secondly, We may more fully understand what is here forbidden, by a brief reflection upon the custom of the Heathens in this matter: For, (says the Text) *use not vain repetitions, as the Heathens do*: Now the Heathens (as may appear from their Tragoedians) were wont, many times, in their worship, to make repetition of the same words; especially of the names of that God which they prayed unto: And they conjectured also, that by how much the louder and more shrill their speech was, so much the more ready would their Gods be to give them audience, and to return answers to their petitions. To this custom does *Elijah* seem to allude, when he speaks Ironically to *Baal's* Prophets, (*1 Kings 18. 27.*) *Cry aloud, for he is a God; either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is on a journey; or peradventure, he sleepeth, and must be awaked.*
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Now, the prayer of the Separatist being conceived *extempore*, he delivering those things and words, that a quick fancy, and sudden invention, prompts him to, it must needs be, that from the nature of such worship, he will be necessitated to use these prohibited repetitions: For, where matter, and method, yea, and expressions too, are not before hand studied, and composed, and put into some decent order, the memory cannot firmly retain what has been before uttered, when the fancy and invention has all along been so strictly imployed; which is evident from this; That a gifted man, who speaks *extempore*, cannot, afterward, remember his own prayer, or give any tolerable account to men, of what he has, before, spoken to God: So, that 'tis a thousand to one in this attempt, but something, both in matter and phrase, will often be brought upon the stage again; and several petitions escape from the mouths of such extraordinary pretenders, that have, more than once, been presented before. For, their prayer being wire-drawn into one length; or delivered in a continued and uninterrupted chain of language,

guage; and expressions, that must not admit of any large Chasms, or long intermissions, but one thing must follow close at the back of another; how can it be, considering humane frailties, and indispositions, but, through the defect of present and ready invention, there must be some larger gaping silence; or else barrenness must be supplied with the repetitions of what has gone before? Nay, how often have we heard, *Lord, Lord; and we pray thee, and we beseech thee*, and the like expressions, to supply the want of invention, or to draw a covering over inadvertent and incoherent thoughts of the man, who pretends to be much gifted in this affair? So that then, he is fain to stop gaps in stead of making a new hedge; he coughs and spits, in the room of a full stream of language, and seems to be like a Pump when the water is going away with an hiss, making a great hollow noise, with little sense or signification: And like the Heathen Priests that worshipped *Baal*, who, from morning till noon, cryed out, *O Baal! hear us*, (*1 Kings 18. 26.*); and very probably, to as little purpose, whilst there is no voice, nor any that
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answers : Or else, like those mutinous *Ephesians*, stirr'd up by the subtilty of a *Silver-smith*, with an argument drawn from the defence of their Trade, who, for the space of two long hours, cryed out with a loud voice, *Great is Diana of the Ephesians*, (*Acts* 19. 34.). And whether such a worship, when strong Lungs become the bellows, to blow men up, that they may vent themselves in tautologies and repetitions, and broken sentences, when they pretend to utter a continued prayer, is fit to be offered to the Supreme God, and to be presented, in such loose petitions, to him by the hands of a glorious interceding Redeemer, let any, that are not resolved to be prejudiced against any reasoning in this affair, and are not stupid or wilful to a Proverb, consider first, and then, in Gods name, let them judge. But lest we should meet with an usual recrimination, in this particular ; I must observe here, what is easily inferr'd from a transient reflection upon the former exposition, that all repetitions are not vain ; nor such as are prohibited by our Saviour : But, as *Maldonate* expresses it, he forbids, *supervacaneam, & inanem studio affecta-*

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tam verborum copiam: A superfluous, and an empty affected plenty of words: when we permit our language too much to overflow our sense, and abound in expressions, as the Heathen did, because they *thought to be heard for their much speaking*: They conjectured, it seems, that such plenty of words, might cause the deafest of their Gods to hear them, when they pelted them with vollies of thick language; and that they would better understand the matter and substance of what they offered in their petitions, and more easily remember all, when things were so frequently inculcated by repetitions: But alas! the Heathens worshipped one sort of God, but the Christians present their prayers to another. And as mens notions concerning the God whom they worship vary, so will their worship vary too, if they act suitably to the arguments and inferences of their own reason. If men, therefore, who so bustle, in this world, about the manner of addressing themselves to the Deity, would but impartially state the nature of that Being, to whom they devote their acts of Religion; and then compare their worship which they
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give him with those Attributes by which they describe him, and enquire diligently what is worthy of him; we need not have so many divisions, where all worship the same God, about those things that are not reveal'd, nor ferment disturbances about those that are; since it cannot (without blasphemy) be supposed, that God would require worship from Christians, that did not correspond to his Essence and Attributes, when he hath declared, that *he will be worshipped in spirit and in truth*; and that he seeketh such to worship him. But, to let this pass; and to return to the prohibition of vain repetitions; this will not conclude against the repetition of some prayers, and petitions in the Liturgy of our Church; because they are used either in divers Services, which antiently had their different and successive seasons allowed them; or in the same, upon some new, and emergent, occasions, being placed at the end of divers readings, and where opportunities and reasons present themselves for returning to the same supplications and thanksgivings. And there can be no argument to prove, that God delights in the variation

tion of phrases, where the reason and matter of prayer and praise are still the same ; nor any cause why we should endeavour it ; unless it be to shew our copiousness of language, or to tickle the ears of a wavering multitude, which is alwayes too much given to change. These divers Services, and intermixed readings, are the cause of the repetitions of the Lords Prayer, and the invocations of the Persons in the Trinity apart : And being deficient in all our prayers, we supply our imperfections, by one of divine authority and composure, which is more compleat and full ; which, as often as we pray, we are commanded to use. And, indeed, our Lords Prayer is as Salt to season our Sacrifice, lest it should not be acceptable to the nostrils of him, to whom all our devotions are directed. And till the 118th and 136th *Psalms* are expunged from the Sacred Canon, the force of an objection which is raised upon no stronger a foundation, will not be able to throw down, or batter, the antient Order and Uniformity of the Church of Christ. For although men may instance in repetitions in our Service, they are not of

the nature with the Tautologies of the Heathen, nor such vain reduplications as our Saviour prohibits : No, nor yet to be parallel'd with the extravagancies of their prayers, against which, I have here presumed to argue : Because ours are made with judgement, and due reason for them ; the matter being considerable, and the returns not more frequent, than the offering of the same prayers and praises ought to be : But theirs, are needless, because they admit not the same justification, are the effects of barrenness, and want of invention, or else of carelessness and inadvertency ; and serve only to supply the room of matter and sense with airy words, and empty sounds, and, in the place of true and substantial harmony, they substitute indecency, and jarring discords.

C H A P. XV.

I Proceed now to a Fourth Reason that we have against the prayers of our *extempore* Separatists, and to prove, that they are unsuitable to the Greatness and Glory of that God, whom they pretend to seek; and that is, because they are unprofitably long, and tediously protracted, in their publick Assemblies; so that some, who had not their whole Sermons ready, have spent the Sands in the Hour-glass, that measured them, by this knack of enlarging their *extempore* prayer in the Pulpit, adventuring to speak to God without premeditation, when they durst not so speak to the people. But, to let this pass at present; (which yet I know to have been too true). We usually petition Princes, and persons of great quality, in as brief and compendious a form, as the matter of our desires is capable of, that it may be comprehended within as narrow a compass, as

significant and full expressions can represent it. And shall we suppose, the great God, to be of a less Majesty, than an earthly King; or less sagacious and apprehensive; or not to merit as much respect, as Princes and Governours, who are his Deputies and Vicegerents? Will not the same, and greater, reasons too, that incline us to make brief petitions, to the advanced, and understanding, persons in this world, prevail with us, to use a decent brevity, and curtness, in our language, when we make our requests known to God? Especially, since we all acknowledge, that he foresees the wants of the world, his Providence being over all his works) having infinite Knowledge, so that nothing can escape him, and such an essential and perfect goodness, that there is not need of much rhetorick, to incline him to relieve the necessities of mankind, when, with due reverence, and hearty affection, they call upon his Name, and now, under the Gospel, through the Mediation of his Son, which causes his very bowels to yearn. He that knoweth the secrets of mens hearts, needs not many words to inform him of the things

things they want, and what will be most convenient for them. This is the argument which our Saviour urges against inordinate cares for the things of this life; even *because our heavenly Father knoweth, that we have need of these things*, (*Matth. 6. 32.*) And Solomon, in the forementioned Text, (*Eccles. 5.*) advises men, that, because there is so great a distance and disproportion betwixt God and themselves, therefore, when they speak to him, *their words should be few*: and he backs his counsel with this argumentative similitude, That as *multitude of business makes men subject to unquietness and dreams*; so a fools voice is known by a *multitude of words*: As if that were the inconsiderate sacrifice of fools, which he made mention of in the first Verse, when exuberant expressions make up the oblation. He, that has made but slender observations, may easily discern, that the most glorious God of all the world took great care, in the institutions of his worship, to difference it from the Heathen Idolatry; and would never permit their Groves to have a communion with his Sanctuary. Now, it was a common custom, among them,

to draw out their prayers into a tedious, as well as unprofitable, length; though they did it by reiterating the same expressions, upon no new reason at all; but because of the false notions of God, which they had imbibed, that made uncouth impressions on their understandings. For they conjectured, that, by how much the louder their voices were extended, with so much the more certainty, would their Gods hear them; and by how much the more frequently the Names of their Gods, and their petitions were repeated, so much the deeper impressions would they make, to cause their attention, incline their wills, and make them to remember to return down supplies to them. Now, such reasons being very unsuitable to the nature of the Christians God, who understands all things by an instantaneous intuition, and cannot possibly forget to be gracious; he needs not any thing to refresh his memory; much less vain and prohibited repetitions. It follows, therefore, that 'tis very disagreeable to his glorious Attributes, for men to pelt him with a long, tedious, continued prayer, beyond what is fit to represent our wants,

wants, enflame our zeal, and raise our affections to a decent height ; to demonstrate our humility and dependence on him, and to quicken our devotion, to a Being, so transcendently great and discerning. Hence, our Saviour, forbidding the fruitless tautologies of the Heathen used in their solemn and most earnest devotions, commands his Disciples, not to be like them ; as well because *they thought to be heard for their much speaking*, as because the God, whom Christians are directed to worship, knows the things they have need of before they ask him ; And then he directs them how to pray in a short and comprehensive form, which all his Disciples were to use and imitate, (*Matth. 6.*). But yet as *St. Austin* saies, (*vid. Epist. 86. & 118.*). God will be intreated, he will be as it were compell'd by Motives and Arguments, and overcome by a certain importunity ; this is a good violence, which our Saviour himself has encouraged men to by the example of the *importunate Widow*, (*Luke 18.*). The design of which parable, as he informs us, was to encourage men alwaies to pray, and not to faint.

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The same thing we are also commanded to do in the Apostles writings; where we are bidden *to continue in prayer, and to watch in the same*, and to persevere in this duty, and the like: Which injunctions, and exhortations must, at least, obtain so far, as to bear up our hearts and expectations in our prayers, and rebuke all desponding thoughts; that so when we petition our Maker, for any blessing that may relieve our necessities, we may not be disheartned by reason of any of his most wise protraction; Nor be discouraged, or discontented, to an omission of our devotions, because we have not a sudden return to our prayers; But that we may still repeat our duty, and be the more instant, by how much the more we may seem to be denied; Unless we receive an apparent signal of Gods displeasure, either at the matter, unseasonableness, or manner of our address; which, because we cannot easily understand, especially if, upon examination of the reason, grounds, and rules of prayer, drawn from the object to whom our devotions are directed, from the condition of our selves, who are petitioners, or from precepts, exhortations, and examples

amples too, which we find exhibited in Sacred Writ, our judgements correspond to our petitions; and, upon scrutiny, we can find no fault in them, nor any defect in our utterance, or deportment. There is no way therefore left, but in all our prayers, to imitate him who was the most Religious man, and the best composer of petitions to God, that ever the world yet saw; *Even Jesus himself, the Mediator of the new Covenant*; who, when he was in his dreadful Agony, being sensible of what he then felt, and fearing also what he must endure when fixed upon the Cross, *prayed that this Cup might pass from him*; Yet 'twas with submission to his Fathers will, which he then signified in words as plain, as they were full of humility; *Nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt, (Matth. 26. 39.)*. But all this may yet be obeyed, without any long and tediously continued prayer, where protraction in the speaker, too frequently renders it ridiculous, and brings an indisposition, and weariness, to most of the devotionists. For men may bestow not only daies, but nights too, in this most great and solemn duty of prayer, (in which, by obeying
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the inferences of reason, and the injunctions of Religion, we enjoy so large and comfortable a privilege) by running through a shorter course of devotions, consisting of many Collects, and premeditated forms, which may include the matter of all our petitions; and, after little intervals of refreshment, returning, with earnestness, to the same again. For prayer, certainly becomes our duty, and our dependance upon God prompts us to it, more to demonstrate our own humility, and devout reliance on the mercies of God, than to inform him of our necessities, & troubles, or by our Oratory to incline him to hear us: And therefore that must be the best, and most compendious, way of worship, by which are answered the great designs, and ends of prayer: And, without doubt, when our intentions and affections are, with the highest ardency, and most vehement desires, imploy'd in this duty, it best demonstrates our own vileness, and a modest confidence in, and love to, God. Now this is more vigorously accomplished, when we use such methods as may least weary and tire our Spirits; And 'tis easie to judge, whether short

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Ejaculations, and brief Collects, intermixed with some other various offices, accompanied with some little intermissions that give breath to, and refresh, the intention, and affections of our minds, be not more conducing to the expediency of this affair, than a long, continued, and uninterrupted devotion : For men may find, (if they will both try and judge fairly) that this latter way dulls the phancy, weakens the invention, darkens the object, (as the eye is dazled with gazing too long at the Sun) and discomposes the whole man ; and makes us more ready to sleep than to pray. But, in the former method, where confessions, petitions, and thanksgivings, are excellently and orderly intermix'd, and follow each other, so that the entrance upon one, is a relaxation from the other, and we stay not too long at a time on either ; and these call upon us for different postures of our bodies, and divers affections and transports of our minds ; Here we receive ease and refreshment, and consequently, must needs be better fitted for a longer continuance, without distraction, than if all were put together in one uninterrupted chain of

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expressions. And therefore St. *Austin* informs, (*Epist.* 121.) That the *Egyptian* Brethren were wont to make very frequent prayers, *Sed eas tamen brevissimas, & raptim quodammodo ejaculatas* : But they were very short, and darted forth with a sudden quickness : And the reason which he gives for this is very apposite to my present argument ; Lest the attention of the mind, which is now vigilant, and lifted up, (absolutely necessary to one that prays) should be dull'd and vanish by a longer stay, and more tedious continuance : Nay, short prayers are compared to sharp darts, that soon pierce the Skies, and enter into Heaven. To commend these, St. *Chrysostom*, upon the Sixth of St. *Matthew*, tells us, that our Lord, in prohibiting vain repetitions, and the customs of the Heathen, seems to him to forbid long prayers ; Long, (saies he) not in time, but in prolixity of expression, and multitude of words. And, indeed, when we have leisure to consider what St. *Austin* saies in the forementioned Epistle, *Hoc negotium plus gemitibus, quam sermonibus agitur, &c.* That prayer is made more with sighs, and groans, than in words

words and expressions, and that it is evidenced more by weeping with our eyes, than by breathing at our mouths ; we need not be so extremely fond of such patch'd, and thereby lengthened prayers, to a continued five hours adventure : Because this discovers only a nimble invention, with volubility of language, placed in a strong and sturdy body ; but it stifles affection, and renders watchfulness it self drowsie in those, that are to join in it ; and keeps him that utters it only awak'd, because he cannot so well speak in his sleep ; and the whole, when done in this manner, demonstrates confidence, but not devotion. Nay, it seems not a little strange to me, that the multitude should be so taken, as they are, with these long-winded gifts of some men ; Since we know what kind of Cattle they were, that first *devoured widows houses, and, for a pretence, made long prayers,* (Matth. 23. 14.). But, indeed, 'tis not a multitude of words, but sincerity of mind, and earnestness of affection, that will prevail with God to be propitious to us : For (as the same Father has it) *much speech is one thing, but a continual daily affection*
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another. Now this raising our affections to their proper objects, inflaming our desires, and testifying our humility and dependance on God, being great designs and ends of our devotion; and those prayers being best composed, that, being offered to the Divine Majesty, are most capable to cause these effects: It follows, that such a tedious length in a continued and uninterrupted chain of petitions, not well accomplishing the great ends and designs of prayer, cannot be so fit to be offered to God, *who requires our best and most lively services*, and will not accept another Sacrifice, when (to borrow an expression) *we have a Male in the Flock*. Add to this, Finally, what strange confessions men usually make, who are forced to lay hold of every advantage to gain a Topick, to lengthen what they call prayer; When he is accounted the most powerful man that remains longest at this exercise: The gifted person's own sins (as has been remark'd before) are usually presented for the faults of the Congregation, and they must permit him, whom they account to be their Minister to tell lies in behalf of the people, if all his Auditory are
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not guilty of the same particular crimes with himself. 'Tis true, indeed, that a general confession of Commissions, and Omissions, all mankind may join in ; Because, as the Apostle expresses it, *we have all sinned, and come short of the Glory of God, (Rom. 3. 23.).* Or, in the true and secure words of our *Liturgy, We have left undone those things which we ought to have done; And have done those things which we ought not to have done.* But to extend a solemn and publick Confession, to the length of all the Commands of God, and all those faults of men that we can reduce to such comprehensive Laws, together with their circumstances, and aggravations; And for one man, in publick, to acknowledge, as the Mouth of all the people, that we have broken all these Commandments of God, *both in thought, word, and deed ;* when perhaps few, or none of those, in whose names he presents such Confessions, have actually, and plainly, without a figure, committed *murder, adultery, theft,* or the like ; is to render devout men more vile than they are; to give (as I have hinted) to the very Heathen an opportunity both of scorn, and triumph;

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umph; To tell a lie in the face of the Sun; and solemnize a fallshood in the presence of God, who, *being a God of truth himself*, cannot but hate all lying in the mouths of others. And, besides, what an impudence is this to utter such things in our confessions to him, *who is our Maker, and our Judge*, that are not only doubtful, but untrue? In which, considering people cannot join with others that make them, because they must acknowledge guilt, before they have yet committed the Crime; and condemn themselves by their own confession, when neither their own consciences accuse them, nor does God himself convict and judge them. Such inventions the evil Spirit himself may not only allow, but recommend to the world; Because they too frequently not only teach men how vile the Confessor is himself, but how many wayes Gods Commandments may be broken by them, and instruct the people in new waies of offending God which they were ignorant in before. Now whether such service is fit to be offered to the great God, whom the Christians worship; Who can, and will, severely revenge himself on those, that thus publick-

lickly affront his Majesty ; *who cannot lie*, but is a Being of infinite splendor, and perfection, and delights not in the blemishes *of the halt, and blind*, who, finally, is a God that is Omniscient, and acquainted with the sincerity and truth of mens Confessions, and to what ends, and designs they are uttered ; Who knows the conveniency, wisdom, and ardor of our devotions, and the original and height of all the substance, and circumstances of our prayers, together with all the parts of them ; I shall leave to all wise and thinking Religious men to consider, when they are unprejudiced and retired, by themselves.

C H A P. X VI.

I Shall, in this Chapter, urge another reason against the strange *extempore* prayers of our Separatists, to evidence that their publick devotions are not suitable to the greatness and glory of that God, whom they pretend to worship; And that is, because, generally, those whom they admit to be the mouths of their Congregations manage their prayers in so careless and loose a manner, as if they had more thoughtfulness about that by which they endeavour to recommend themselves to men, than that by which they attempt to approve themselves to God. Otherwise what means the great variety, and reiteration, of expressions, when they petition for the same things? The Great God cannot, certainly, be rendered more propitious, or receive a more convincing and prevailing argument to grant relief, and a supply, to mens necessities, because various phras-

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ses exprefs their wants ; And every time they have occasion to renew their petitions for the same favours, they do it in different language, and method : Because 'tis not the rhetorick, or copiousness of words, but the affection, humility, and piety of mankind, recommended by the Merits, and Intercession of Christ, that now incline the great God to hear our prayers, and grant our requests. Yet various phrases do, indeed, please and captivate the fancies of many weak and unstable men, and give advantage to the designs of Schism, by some mens licensing themselves to take a liberty in suiting their prayers to the temperament and humours of such persons, whom these leading Shepherds intend to fold among their separated Flocks ; And therefore is it, that they love not the language of the Church, which is grave, and manly, and easie to be understood ; but they adapt their expressions to certain tones, and particular, mimical, and surprizing gestures, by which they captivate silly women, or melancholy men, whom they find possessed with more passion, than understanding. This I suppose to have been the great

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reason and motive why the Papists, resolving, by all possible means, to rend us in pieces, first introduced this way of *extempore* prayer, (far different from that mental prayer of Mr. *Cressy*, which a late Authour so Jesuitically refuses). As may more largely appear to any candid Reader in a little Book, Entituled, *Foxes and Firebrands*. But if some such ends, by which they plainly gratifie the Papists, were not designed by the Masters of our private Assemblies, who Lord it over the faith of some men, and the Authority of others, to draw as many as they are able into the Net which they have spread in the midst of the waters; Especially over such Fish, as carry mony in their mouths: If they did not (in plain terms) endeavour to make parties in the Church, that their own may, at last, appear to be the greatest, by whatever, under the pretext of Religion, conveighs delight by that variety which pleases the generality of mankind; Why should they not as well Preach *extempore*, as pray so? In their Sermons, I am sure, they were wont to use all the art, and study that they could, accommodating their Doctrines,

Crines, and expressions too, that their pains might bear proportion to their Auditory, and the fashion, and example of those, who were in greatest repute amongst them : And I cannot divine what might be the cause of this different regard to prayer, and Preaching, unless they had more care in those speeches they directed unto men, than they took about those which they presented unto God : For they seem to me to have no greater promise of an assistance from Heaven, in relation to the one, than they have also with reference to the other. Do they think that Text, in the Eighth to the *Romans*, proves effectually, that the Holy Ghost assists them in their prayers, because the Apostle has delivered, that, likewise, *the Spirit helpeth our infirmities ; because we know not what we should pray for as we ought, &c.* If it be well weighed, and considered with the Context, it will only evidence our Saviours most earnest and wise Intercessions for us, in Heaven, by the holy Spirit, which alwaies accompanies him ; The support of our minds under the greatest pressures we meet with in this world ; Or, at most, that the Scripture, being

dictated by the Spirit, has given us directions for the proper heads, and matter of our prayers, and resolves, itill, by some benign and secret influence, (which we are not able to describe to others) to proportion our affections, and elevate our minds to the importance of the concernments we pray for, and the greatness of that Majesty to whom we petition. And because (if I were the greatest Critick in the world) I should alwaies abhor the founding any necessary Doctrine upon the signification of a word in Scripture; which words we know (as in prophane Authors) are frequently equivocal; and restrain'd according to the compass of that matter in which they are: Therefore I say nothing of συναρπασμένους, nor of ἀδενείας, nor of αὐτὸ τὸ πνεῦμα, nor of ἡσυχασμόν, no, nor concerning σεναγμοῖς ἀλαλήτοις, neither. But if men are resolved, for ends that will not serve them at the day of Judgement, to which they refer many things that may be ended here, to make these words, against their own will, in contradiction to the reason and experience of all thinking men, that are not either knavish, or mad, to ex-

express a promise of some extraordinary assistance from the Spirit now in our inventions of matter, and words in prayer unto God. They may as well rely, (if they are pleased with such waies of interpreting Scripture) upon that promise of our Saviour made to the Apostles, to enable them to preach and write the Doctrines of the Gospel; (*John 16. 13.*). *Howbeit, when he, the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth.* And because there were Divine inspirations at the first, which were necessary, if God would deliver a Law by the mouths, or writings of any selected out of the race of men; Our gifted Brethren may, if they please, take occasion from the 10th of *St. Matthew, vers. 19th*, and 20th, to attempt any thing without premeditation, or study, (and then to be sure we should be hard enough for them): Since our Saviour there informs his Disciples, *that they need take no thought what, or how, they should speak; because it should be given them in that hour; (i. e. when they might have occasion.)*. And he uses an Argument to raile, and to confirm their belief of it; *For it is not ye that speak (saies he); but the Spirit*

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rit of your Father which speaketh in you.
 And yet I fancy that if our *extempore* men were in the same circumstances, and put under those conditions which this Text supposes, and were accused of something Capital, before a Magistrate, they would not only study all waies of clearing themselves, to avoid the punishment, what ever at last became of the guilt; And this they would endeavour by all the means that a close consultation with their own thoughts could possibly suggest, and not only, with seriousness, prepare an answer to any accusation of this nature; But, I believe too, they would condescend to advise with the learned in the Law, that they might (if possibly) avoid the Sentence of the Judge. Nay, in such cases, whether they would see, bribe, or make the greatest friends they could, I leave to their own Consciences, and experience, that I may say nothing of making publick commotions, to save themselves. And as in business of this nature, gifted men are inclined to think that such promises of assistance were only intended for a shorter time, and not to reach this present age; So though the Apostles, (*Acts 2.*) *Being*
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fill'd with the Holy Ghost, began to speak with divers languages, as the Spirit gave them utterance; they will submit their Spirits, and condescend to the contrivance of heads of matter, and modes of expression, when they preach the Gospel; though they are to speak in no other than their Mother Tongue. Now why should this great care be had in their Sermons to the people, when they usually have so slender a regard to what they utter in their prayers to God, if there were no distinctions of times and seasons, in relation to the promises and assistances of Gods Spirit? (For surely Preaching, as well as praying, is an ordinance to continue 'till the Elect are gathered; and that will not be, till the end of the world.) Unless they will affirm, and give us too apparent an Argument to believe, that the Spirit has so ordered matters, that less pains and diligence are to be used when we address to God, than when we speak only to the people. And if any are so bold to talk thus, I hate to refute such nonsense, and blasphemy both together: For it plainly appears, that such men must be liable to the same rebuke, which the
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chief Rulers of the *Jews* received from our Saviour, recorded in the Gospel of St. *John*, (Chap. 12. 43.); *Who, though they believed on him, did not confess him, because they loved the praise of men, more than the praise of God : And, let their ears be never so much circumcised, they render themselves opposite to the true circumcision, whose praise is not of men but of God, (Rom. 2. 29.).* And how far such contrivances may comport with sincerity, and be distant from that Hypocrisie, which has so many woes attending it, I shall leave to those, who are concerned, to adjust; and content my self with that direction which the great Authour of our most excellent Religion, has delivered in relation to private devotions, which holds good in publick too, prohibiting all sinister, and hypocritical designs in prayer, to gain the praises and acclamations of men : *And, when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the Hypocrites are; For they love to pray standing in the Synagogues, and in the corners of the Streets, that they may be seen of men, (Matth. 6. 5.).* I shall not therefore value at all how I am recommended unto men, if their approbation shall
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render those actions that gain it, unacceptable and odious unto God. He that is called to that Honourable, although despised, Office of a Minister, in the true Church of Christ, must neither fear the frowns of men, nor the malice of Devils; and nobody can bestow greater flurs or indignities on our vocations, or persons, than our receiving the Sacred Character may forewarn us to expect. We know it is an Employment unacceptable to the guilty, to tell men of their faults, redargue their errors, *and to put them to open rebuke and shame*; nay, by chance sometimes, to their very faces: And, in doing this, we cannot but expect to bear some share in our Saviours sufferings; Who, though he was the best Preacher of the Gospel, was both contemned, whipt, and Crucified. *Now the Disciple is not above his Master, nor is the Servant above his Lord*; And 'tis no more than he has forwarned us to expect, *if we are hated of all men for his names sake*. Nay, were it not that the great God himself espouses our quarrels, when truth remains unshaken on our side, by his Providence, making way for deliverence from our enemies;
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that he that despiseth us, despiseth Christ himself, *and he that despiseth him, despiseth him, also, that sent him (Luke 10. 16.).* And that not only promises of temporal deliverances, or at least supports under the pressures of our adversaries, but an eternal reward is also granted to him that continues and perseveres unto the end (*Matth. 10. 22.*) : We should have been quite swallowed up by those strange children, *whose teeth are Spears and Arrows, and their tongue a sharp Sword.* And we should have, as long as we are permitted to live, work nough cut out for us, not only to tire the most active and indefatigable minds among us, but even to disturb our Spirits, and break our hearts. For there is nothing almost in the Christian Religion, but what either the wit or malice of men, has render'd doubtful ; And the perverse wranglings of one man with another, have made that a Subject to dispute upon, which was at first designed to unite the whole world, in the strictest bonds of Catholick charity, by a compleat and uniform profession, and practice of one Religion. And though there is no ground either in Scripture, or Antiquity, to found
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these rude, indigested, long, and Hypocritical prayers on; Yet their Patrons, that they may continue to delude the people, do, like men in a Shipwrack, lay hold of any plank to save them. And therefore (notwithstanding, as they manage their prayers, 'tis apparent blasphemy to assert it) they intitle the most Holy Spirit of God to all their loose, insipid, and most ridiculous prayers, as if he were the very inditer of them, or at least a wonderful, and miraculous, coadjutor in supplying, by an immediate impulse, an *extempore* man with matter and expressions. Yet I know not well (although I am able, upon a private occasion, to pray, in this manner, by my self) upon what they can ground their peculiar confidence, and extraordinary expectation in this matter; but either upon the Primitive examples of men inspired, when the infancy of the Church more necessarily required it, which, being extraordinary, can be no common precedent; Or upon some expressions of St. Paul, (1 Cor. 14. chap.) *I will pray by the Spirit, and I will sing by the Spirit, and blessing by the Spirit, and the like.* Now whatever assistances were

were at first given either for a sign to confirm the Authority of the Gospel, or the Commission of any that Preached it to the World ; Or else to enable some to instruct others, or to pray with them, in those more early times of Christianity ; they are no more to be expected now the Gospel has been so long planted, than that gift of tongues which St. *Paul* speaks of, when he saies, *that he will sing, or pray, or bless by the Spirit.* And that this is the plain meaning of the forementioned Chapter, is very obvious to any that will peruse it : And that the Apostle (though himself had extraordinary assistences in these matters) does not incourage *extempore* devotions, but only rebuke disorders among those, who, having the miraculous gift of tongues, prayed in strange languages to the people, which they understood not, has been already concluded, upon consideration of the Chapter, in this Discourse. But, because it is urged by *Fanaticks* against us, in another sence than that in which we urge it against the *Papists*, as if they would give these a deliverance by a new interpretation ; I will speak a little upon it again ; to
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shew that praying by the Spirit, in this place, cannot countenance *extempore* prayer; Nor has it any more relation to it than *Latin*, and *Greek*, has to *English*; Nay, as 'tis now used, not so much neither. The Reverend Dr. Owen, in his *Critical Discourse of the work of the Holy Spirit in Prayer, &c.* has an excellent reason, (*pag. 19.*) why the Holy Spirit does not formally pray; *Because all prayer, whether Oral, or Interpretative, is the act of a nature inferior to that which is prayed to.* So that I suppose these mens prayers, whatever, in the mean time, they say to us, are not so immediately dictated by the Spirit, as if he that uttered them, were only the pipe through which (without a Metaphor) the waters, or the wind flow: But 'tis some kind of assistance which they strive for, to help their invention, and expressions, in prayer, beyond a benign influence upon us to raise our graces and affections in our devotion: Which, if they understand themselves, they are very loth to communicate the sense of it to others. However, that St. Paul cannot justify them in this place, is plain from the fourteenth Verse of the Chapter. *If*

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*I pray (saies he) in an unknown tongue, my Spirit prayeth; (i.e. the gift of tongues, which is an effect flowing from the Holy Ghost, prayeth.). But my own apprehension of what, by vertue of this extraordinary gift, I utter, is no argument to prove that it is advantageous unto others; For (saies he) my understanding is unfruitful; i.e. to those who hearing, should have joined with me. And then it follows, I will pray by the Spirit, and I will pray by my understanding also. That is; when he did pray in an unknown tongue; he would, by his understanding, so interpret it, as to render the prayer intelligible unto others. So that understanding, here, is opposed to Spirit; i.e. the speaking as those do, who have not the gift of divers languages, when they deliver the conceptions of their minds; to an utterance of our petitions in an unknown tongue; And it concludes, indeed, against the Publick Service of the Papists in Latin, and justifies our own in English: (As I have already shewed). But it can neither strengthen the Enthusiast, nor detract from the worth, or reputation, of a well composed Liturgy. And that this is the true meaning of this Scripture, and
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the real opposition which is here made of *Spirit*, to *understanding* ; and the difference betwixt them, appears, plainly, from the naked words of the nineteenth Verse, without any Paraphrase upon them : For (saies the Apostle) *I had rather speak five words with mine understanding, than by my voice I may teach others also, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue.* And though St. Chrysostom's interpretation of the whole, does not in every part agree with this ; Yet he expounds *Spirit*, by *the gift of tongues*. But if men will still evidence their vanity by defending their extravagancies by Texts of Scripture, (which have been won from them, as often as they have trump'd them up to the world) and urge that in the twelfth of *Zechariah* ; Where God promises to pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of Grace, and of Supplications, &c. They will gain but little countenance from hence, for their irrational and loose way of worship ; Though, as a neat Commentator of their own descants upon it, it should be poured out, as by whole Pailfuls. (*Trapp in loc.*). For nothing can be

concluded from this Text, but that the time should come in which God would, by his benign operations, confer so much favour to the *Jews*, that they who were hardned, through their own infidelity, to the affronting, and Crucifying the blessed Jesus, should so relent for their former wickedness, that they would pray to God, and petition for their pardon, when they came to be convinced that the very person, whom they put to death, under the notion of an Impostor, was, indeed, the promised *Messiah*: And so it no more concludes, that the Holy Ghost is promised under the Gospel to dictate matter and expressions to all those who devoutly pray; than it proves all Saints, under this dispensation, to be perfect *Jews* that crucified their Saviour. Nor can all the *Hebrew*, and *Greek*, and *Latin* in the world, make either out from this Text. Nay, such Doctrine can no more be founded on this Prophecy of *Zechariah*; than that the Holy Ghost should also dictate matter, and words in Preaching too, and render all Sanctified mens Sermons, as much the word of God as the Scriptures, can be infer'd from that Promise,

mise, in the second of *Joel* ; where God saies, *I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your Sons and your Daughters shall prophesie* : Since, this was fulfilled on that eminent day of *Pentecost*, when the *Holy Ghost* visibly descended on the Apostles, to enable them to speak divers languages, and to work Miracles, &c. for the propagation, and confirmation, of the Gospel ; and accordingly 'tis limited by *St. Peter*, (*Acts* 2. 16.). If men will still trifle with the Scriptures, let them allow also women to be Preachers as well as men ; Because, in the promise, it is said, *that Daughters, as well as Sons, shall Prophesie* ; 'Twill only (as 'tis usual with some men) prefer the *Old Testament* to the *New*, and set a Prophet, and an Apostle together by the ears, that we may judge the advantage to which we please, as he gratifies either our humour, or our interest. But suppose our *extempore* men should flie from Scripture, to the succeeding Writers among the Christians ; as I know not but they may, when they find any thing that makes for them ; and tell us that all this worship, which we de-claim against, is justifiable by the pra-

Etice of the Primitive Christians, who, living near the times of our Saviour, and his Apostles, must needs understand their Doctrine, and their practice better than we, who live in an Age so far off; and quote some passages from the Ancient Fathers to justify their extravagant devotions now. I only reply, (1.) We grant that in the first times of Miraculous operations, before the Christian Church was well settled in the World, the Spirit did as well dictate prayer to some, for the help of others, as it inspired some to deliver the Christian Doctrines and faith, that they might be derived downward to posterity: But all this ceased, afterwards, when the reasons of it ceased, when the Canon of the new Law was compleated, and Knowledge, and Parts, became the fruits of liberal education, and the Spirits co-operation with human industry. (2.) That the Fathers give no countenance to this *extempore*, wild, way of prayer; And the later Patrons of this conceived method, when they urge any expressions from them, are fain to squeeze a few particular passages hard, either by a false rehearsal; Or else by Criticising, and

and large interpretations, they draw their words off from the sence which the subject matter, and coherence of the place, does willingly afford them. (3.) That this way of arguing in this affair is disclaimed by a late *Nonconformist* writer, who is eminent both in venting, and darkning, too, these *extempore* prayers; And almost as ancient as any now living, in defending them: Nay, and he has reason too, when the contrary opinion (as he saies) becomes opposite to his own experience. But, to give him his due, he admits Scripture in this Controversie; And would have men to believe, that all the commands for prayer in the Sacred writings, are so many laws to injoin their own *extempore* way and method: Yet, though he adventures at some promises, I cannot find that he meddles with the commands, so as to appropriate any one to *extempore* prayer; Though he is very good at Criticism and Inference. But natural Enthusiasm, when riveted by custom, skulks so within a man, that, though possess'd with it, he does not know it; And 'tis such another thing, as what the vulgar call *Arminianism*, which a man

may sometimes be charg'd with, when he yet pleads not guilty. As I have heard of another great Writer, whose Aphorisms, when Dr. Hammond had perused, presently replied ; *This man is an Arminian, but he does not know it.* (4.) If any will defend these conceiv'd publick prayers from Antiquity ; I wish they would also put other matters in Controversie betwixt them and the Church of *England*, upon the same trial, and permit the Government of the Church of Christ, to be also determined this way. Yet (Lastly) these things are here set down, not because we have any cause of fear, from what can fairly be urged for *extempore* prayer out of any Ancient Author of undoubted Credit, (the quotations having frequently been answered.) But more especially, because they are just now explain'd in the *Second Part of certain Cases of Conscience resolved, concerning the lawfulness of joining with forms of Prayer in publick worship.* The view of which, since the composure of this small Discourse, has caused me to omit some things here. But because there is a place usually quoted out of *Tertulian*, (*Apol. cap. 30.*) that I find has been

been conveyed as low as the *Anabaptists*, and the *Sectaries* have gotten it by heart; I shall present the Text, with the Notes upon it, which are enough to satisfy reasonable men, that they plainly mistake the meaning of it. For this Father shewing how the Christians prayed for the health, and safety of the Emperors; That they called on the eternal, true, and living God; and, looking up to Heaven with hands spread forth, because innocent, and bare headed, for that they were not ashamed; *Denique sine Monitore, quia de pectore oramus pro omnibus Imperatoribus, vitam illis prolixam, imperium securum, &c.* Lastly, without a Monitor, (or Promptor, said the *Anabaptist*) and, out of the breast, or by heart, the Christians then prayed for all Emperors, that they might have a long life, an happy Government, a safe Palace, strong Forces, a faithful Senate, an honest people, a quiet World, and what things soever are the desires of Mankind, and *Cæsar*. And from the expressions of *sine Monitore*, and *de pectore*, the Schismatick framed an Argument, as he was able, for *extempore* prayer. But in one thing I cannot but be of *Pamelius's*

melius's mind, and of *Rigaltius's* in another, with reference to the understanding this Text. The former infers, from the practice of Christians here mentioned, that apt and decent Ceremonies are to be used in prayer, since *Tertullian* sayes (even when he was making an Apology for them) 'They lifted up their eyes, to signifie a faithful, though humble, confidence in the God, to whom their prayers were addressed. They spread out their hands to testify their innocence; and were bare-headed, to let the naked truth of their Religion appear, and thereby profess'd such a vertue, and piety, and truth too, in their faith and manners, that they need not cover their heads, (which was a token of shame) nor veil their faces; no, nor hold their Hats before them neither, since they had no cause to blush for their Religion, nor to be ashamed of the Gospel of Christ. These, it seems, were, in those dayes, Symbolical Ceremonies. But, I have reason, also, to take some hints from the latter Interpreter of this place in *Tertullian*, to prove, that another thing is meant by *sine Monitore*, and *de pectore*,

More, than what the Separatists knavishly suggest; viz. That the Monitor here, denotes a particular Officer among the Heathen, called by that title, and was one, who, in their publick devotion, read to the people the prayer set down in writing, that there might neither be an omission of words, or any expressions uttered preposterously. He mentions also another Officer to attend to this; and another *Custos*, who called on the people, not to be too loud. Now, the second of these, seems to be a person, who kept the Catalogues of the *Roman* Deities, to whom several Petitions and Services were directed, and might, for ought I can find to the contrary, have the custody of the written prayers themselves. This, some would have to be a kind of *Nomenclator*, who signified the Names of the Heathen Gods, and the particular Deities, to whom, at any time, addresses were to be made, suitable to particular occasions, and wants. For these, like the Canonized Saints in the Church of *Rome*, were not equally to be invoked for all things; but one for this, and another for that: Now, this *Custos* (in *Rigaltius's* Note, which
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he refers us to *Pliny* for) hearkned and instructed the Monitor when he failed, and brought forth, or delivered the Book, and declared the Name of the God to be invok'd; that so they might not absurdly pray to *Mars* for Patience, to *Bacchus* for Wisdom, or *Apollo* for Wine; and the like. Now, the Christians, addressing themselves only to one God, could not be liable to such mistakes; and therefore need neither *Custos*, nor *Monitor*; because frequent use had made their prayers familiar, so that all had them perfectly by heart, and therefore joyned with them with their very souls; and were not so ignorant in their daily devotions, as if they never heard their prayers before; or were, every day, to change their prayers and their God together. But, if the strength of the Separatists argument shall lay in the reason why, as *Tertullian* sayes, they needed not this Monitor, because they prayed *de pectore*, and so needed not so much as a form to direct them; this can no more be proved from this place, than that because they prayed *sine Monitore*, the Christians then had no Minister to direct the people, either
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by premeditated, or conceived, prayer. The sense of the place therefore must be this, that the Christians needed not a *Custos* or a *Monitor*, neither any to direct them, to what particular God they should pray, since they owned but one; nor any to put them in mind to pray for the Emperours, because, this they were willingly inclined to; and did it from, or with, all their hearts: And, this is a very probable account of the place; because, *Tertullian* here, making an Apology for the Christians to *Alexander Severus*, and *Antoninus* his Son, shewes, how heartily and sincerely they prayed for the Emperours, and that their Religion could not disturb, but advantage their Government, Because, praying thus heartily for them, they could not but wish, and act for, their welfare: And this argument certainly holds among all those who are sincere in Religion; But there is no fence against a Pharisee, or an Hypocrite; only we must remit all such to the judgment of that God, to whom they pretend to pray. I shall conclude this with a small animadversion, or rather advice to those who are so pleased with *extempore* prayer, that they usually

ly deliver themselves, in this duty, without a serious and orderly premeditation. That they would impartially consider, whether, when their minds and souls are so intent on the invention of matter, and words to express it, they can so well reflect on the object of their prayer; especially since our quickest and most retired thoughts cannot admit of divers objects at the same moment! And if not; then whilst men are inventing matter, and expressions to fill their prayers, it may be worth inward reflections upon themselves, whether whilst they are busied to find out their devotions they do not, at the same time, lose their God? And now I have written all that my present thoughts suggest; and have endeavoured to prove, by the strongest arguments which my slender abilities are able either to collect, or invent, that the worship of the Separatists (as 'tis commonly managed) is not suitable to the Being and Attributes of the God whom they pretend to adore; the dependence of Mankind on him; nor the infinite distance, and disproportion that is betwixt him and themselves: Which may, perhaps, add something
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to the fortification of the members of our own Church, if it cannot cause some sad reflections in the better natur'd part of those who, being otherwise minded, have separated from it : And it may give some rebuke to the bold confidence of such men as are not so hardned, that they think there is no need of repentance, or that the shame which attends it will be worse to them, than the want of the thing it self; and check the rude presumption of those who, to exalt themselves, assume too large a familiarity with their Maker. And now I shall trouble the Reader with very little more; being conscious to my self, how much I have already tired any that has had patience to read this Discourse quite through: Yet because extravagant and very lofty men pretend to inspiration in such matters as these ; as if the holy Spirit dictated matter and words, to all Saints when they thus pray *extempore*. If it be true, I acknowledge my self to have blasphemed, in this Discourse; But if it be false, (as I verily believe it is) then they themselves have blasphemed the *Holy Spirit of God*. And to make a judgement in this case, I shall only in-
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treat the impartial Reader, who I suppose is come thus far with me to our journeys end, (1.) to consider if what I have said, be argumentative to convince him, then the blasphemy remains, in the presumption of our Adversaries, on their own side. (2.) If their prayers were thus inspired they would be equally Canonical with the Scriptures; For what made the Scriptures a Rule of life, but because they were given *by inspiration from God*? (2 Tim. 3. 16.). And Saint Peter informs us, that *holy men of God spake in old time, as they were moved by the Holy Ghost*, (2 Pet. 1. 21.). And though men have been, at sundry times, and in divers manners, spoken unto in the Old, and New, Testament; yet it was *God who delivered his messages unto men*, (Heb. 1. 1.). And because he inspired the Writers of the Old Testament, and the New, to a delivery of what their words and writings have presented to the world, therefore we receive them as the Oracles of God, and endeavour to manage our lives by them. God Almighty has no where declared what Books are Scripture, and what not; But this we learn by such arguments

ments as convince us that the men that wrote them, were inspired by the *Holy Ghost*. Now could these mens prayers, of which we now discourse, be proved to be dictated by the *Holy Ghost*, they would be equally valid with the Scriptures: For, as in the proof of the truth of the holy Scriptures, if the Historical part be proved to be true, the Doctrines, that are included in the History, will, by the same evidence, appear true also: So if we allow the confessions, petitions, and thanksgivings, of these persons to be inspired, the propositions on which they are founded, and all the Doctrines insinuated in them, will be admitted as an effect of the inspiration also; and then what inspired Controversies should we have? Nay, there would not only be additions to the Sacred Canon, which *St. John* is quoted by themselves to have prohibited; And Doctrines also, and prayers too, that have no foundation in that Sacred Writ, which has been derived as a compleat rule for sundry Ages: But we must receive such large Appendixes, that they would not only surmount all Popish traditions, though

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they should superadd those of the *Jews* ; But it might be said, in the words of the *Evangelist*, (without any, or but a little, *Hyperbole*) That if they were written, the world it self could not contain the Books, because the prayers of these are so various and long ; And beside this, it would level the Prophets, our Saviours, and his Apostles prayers to the rude, and indigested, and extravagant conceptions which our natural Enthusiasts utter in those, which all men call *extempore*, prayers. (3.) If these men had that extraordinary assistance from the Spirit of God, or such an inspiration to which so bold a pretence is made ; Then the Spirit of God must be rendered inconsistent with it self ; Since it would frame tedious and long prayers contrary to that plain fulness, and convenient brevity, which we find in those that are recorded in Sacred Writ, as delivered by the Prophets, or Apostles, or even our Saviour himself : And then the examples mentioned in the Book of God, will seem to be changed by extraordinary motions from his own Spirit. (Lastly,) Consider that, notwithstanding all our

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extempore mens pretensions, their prayers cannot be the product of inspiration, dictating to the speaker, matter and words ; Because this sudden, deceiving, Knack, is plainly discoverable, by those that know, and can use, it, also, as well as themselves, to be the effect of quickness of invention in one who remembers Scripture Phrases ; who has a voluble and ready tongue ; and 'tis gained only by frequent use, together with little arts in the composure : At several times 'tis done by changing the places of expressions, or altering the method, so that it cannot easily be observed by the vulgar ; And all is but like the exercise of a Military Company of men, whose front, or reer, ranks or files, are quickly altered by one, or few words of Command. And this great gift (as 'tis called by some) advances or grows weak, according to the increase or decay of natural abilities, the abatement of knowledge, or the sprightliness and activity of mens parts ; the strength of memory, or the infirmity of it ; the volubility of speech, or the hesitations, and stops in it ; and the practice or disuse of this *extempore*

way, &c. To which we may add boldness, and bashfulness, fear, and a good assurance, and the like. Hence a Right Reverend Prelate, not long since deceased, when, before he arrived at this honour, (though he was alwaies a very great man) he was pleased to write concerning this gift of prayer, was willing to subject it to the rules of Art; that so the Holy Spirit of God in all its infusions into good men, might be supposed only to spiritualize their judgments, and affections, that they might be both sanctified and raised; which may as well be in forms of devotion, as in conceived and *extempore* prayers. And now I have done with all that I intend at present to write on this Subject: But if any Reader shall find an objection which is neither, in this Discourse, obviated in the state, nor already answered in particular instances; I must then refer him to several *Cases of Conscience*, published by sundry Ministers of *London*, very lately exhibited to the World; and more yet that are to come forth; and when they receive a full answer, I may, perhaps, be convinced by it: Although the most that I have yet seen,
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seem to me to have prickles in them, that, for their Brethren (as they call them) to attempt a reply, will render them like things gnawing *thistles*; Yet men may adventure at what they please, and I'll assure them, it shall be all one to me, whether *Don Quixot* encounters a flock of Sheep, or a Wind-mill.

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The Conclusion.

THE Learned *Vossius*, treating of the Idolatry of the Gentiles, acquaints the World, that, by the mistake of the fundamental words in Religion, it was, of old, turned into Mythology, and Gentilism. The same may we also say of those persons, whose pretensions are the highest, in understanding the deepest mysteries of Christianity; That they cover the brightest Sun in a Cloud, and render the plainest things obscure, and find Mysteries in words, that, in themselves, are most obvious to the minds of men, easily representing their own meanings; so that to discover the foundation of Religion, needs no more than the removal of that rubbish, which, by mystical men, is cast upon it. Yet, by such means, some turn the Christian Religion into Gibberish, and cause it to speak in an unknown tongue; either
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by their own misapprehensions, or an industrious veiling of those words that were at first designed to express it : thus converting a plain Religion into more Mysteries, than were to be found at *Ephesus* or *Athens*. Such words as these, are Prayer, Conscience, Faith, Spirit, Gifts, Experience, Predestination, and the like. But the matters of our Religion, ought not to be obscure, because Gods Service is a rational worship, (*Rom. 12. 1.*). And therefore, we find this in *Tully*, *Hec, si Deorum signa sunt, cur essent obscura?* He speaking of Signs, and Wonders, and Revelations from the Gods, *If these* (sayes he) *are notices from the Gods, why should they be so obscure and dark?* And, in his second Book of Divination, he proves, that things which are obscure, want both Grace and Majesty. Indeed, it renders any, the most holy System of Religion, extreamly subject to the censures of men, and liable to be accused for cheat and imposture, when it seems to have two faces, may easily carry a double name, and is veiled under equivocal, or obscure, Doctrines; and the phrases by which it is exhibited to the world, are misted, and

dusky, if they are not quite dark: as if the preservers of the Mysteries of Religion, like the *Keepers of the Liberties of the Commonwealth of England*, intended to keep them all unto themselves. Thus *Theodoret* (*Hist. lib. 2.*) reports of *Leontius* stained with the *Arian Blasphemy*, That he endeavoured with subtilty to hide his opinion under a dubious and equivocal language, altering the sense of *Gloria Patri*, by changing and interposing some little *Prepositions*, and *Conjunctions*, and by rehearsing a part softly to himself, (or, what is more probable, totally omitting it) and another part with an audible voice, that so he might (although it was discovered) avoid accusation among the *Orthodox*: And, though he lost his faith, yet, it seems, he was not willing to lose the *Bishoprick of Antioch*. I wish our *Sectaries* were free from such left-handed designs; (though I believe, there is no danger of their advancing to *Bishopricks*, unless we should conclude those to be distracted, whom yet we suppose to be very wise). And then their simplicity might, a little, stand in the room of the *Ideot*; and either excuse them for mangling and spoiling Religious

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ous worship, by making Myſteries where they cannot find them; or for inventing folly, in which there is no Myſtery at all; or, at leaſt, excuſe them if they refuſed to ſay *Amen* to all the Myſteries produced by others. We are all, I confeſs, of the family of God: But, yet, God does not pray with us, though he is the Maſter of this great family; and it would be abſurd, for him to pray unto himſelf. But it may be, that there is a Myſtery in this too. However, ſtrange words, and uncouth phraſes, ſtrike terror and amazement into the minds of Proſelytes, that they may, by this method, be ſoftned and prepared the more eaſily to receive the impreſſions of thoſe principles, which, otherwiſe, upon retirement and conſideration, their free reaſon would never embrace. And truly, this is an honeſt plea; becauſe, 'tis open, and without reſerve. Though I am afraid, there is a little knavery in it; becauſe, I find *Eusebius* informing us (*Hiſt. lib. 4.*) that *ſome of the Diſciples of Marcus the Magician uttered many Hebrew names, that they might affect thoſe that were newly entred into their ſtudy and diſcipline, with the greater admiration and amazement.*

amazement. In a word, our most exalted and obstinate Separatists are much of the temper, and design too, of those, whom S. *Austin* blames in the beginning of his first Book of the Trinity, who endeavoured to transcend all that was created ; but being kept down with the burden of mortality, when they would seem to know what they were ignorant of, and could not understand what they would, by their bold and resolute affirmations of their own opinions, they bar'd themselves from the means of knowledge, chusing rather, not to correct their own perverse opinion, than to change that which they had assumed, and were resolved to defend. What should I trouble any Reader with what they prop and support what our Schismatics call their Churches ? For, since they cannot derive their own succession, they boldly deny any to be necessary. And yet *Tertullian* (*de Præscript. Hæret. cap. 32.*) sent this challenge to the Hereticks then, *Edant ergo origines Ecclesiarum suarum, &c.* Let them put forth the origine of their Churches, let them turn over the Catalogues of their Bishops, that so descending, by successions,

sions, from the beginning, they may find, that their first Bishop has had one of the Apostles, or Apostolical men, who hath conversed with, and accompanied, the Apostles, his Author, and Antecessor: For by these means, and in this method, do the Apostolick Churches deduce and declare their Original. I might, to enlarge my Discourse, also instance in many of the received Doctrines of the Separatists, that are as currant, as they are common, among them; which yet, under the fair pretence of endearing words, and Scripture proofs, wound the Deity in his glorious Attributes, disturb that blessed harmony and peace, and the Politick Government of mankind, which the profession and practice of the Christian Religion does very much help, and conduce to, and therefore is it by the most Wise God recommended, and established in the World. But I shall forbear these things, at present, and conclude all, with the testimony that *S. Cyprian* bears (to borrow an expression from the spawn of these men) against all prayers that are rude and indigested, more full of words, than of sense, and more abounding

ding with long Periods , than matter that may promote hearty devotion : For the Father (in the beginning of his Tract of the *Lords Prayer*, does abundantly condemn such things as these, by giving a quite contrary account of the practice of the Christians in this particular. Because, after he has given this advertisement, *That God is a God at hand, as well as a God afar off* ; and that, *where-ever a man hides himself, he certainly discerns him, because he fills Heaven and Earth, and sees both the good and the bad* : This holy Father acquaints men, that when the Christians were congregated to celebrate the Divine Offices with the Priest of God, they ought to be mindful, both of Modesty and Discipline ; *Non passim ventilare preces nostras inconditis vocibus, &c.* Not to brethe out our prayers in insipid words, nor throw out our petition, which is modestly to be commended, unto God, with a tumultuous speech ; because God is not the hearer of the voice, but the heart : nor is he to be put in mind of any thing by clamours and outcries, who sees and understands the thoughts of men. And now I have finished this Discourse of Prayer, —hich,

which, I both wrote for, and preached to, the people, to whom, I have, as I ought, fairly dedicated it. And if others, only to exercise their censuring talent, shall find fault with it, let them, in charity honestly mend it; or else they may, as assuredly they will, Turn the Buckles of their Girdles behind them.

FINIS.

I desire here to recommend to the Parishes to which the former Discourse is Dedicated, a few Collections out of a Book intituled, *The Vindication of the Presbyterial Government*; By the Ministers of the Province of London, November the 2. 1649.

They complain, that to such a degree of Apostasie some were arrived, that they were labouring for an odious Toleration of all abominable Opinions, as can shroud themselves under the name of the Christian Religion, *Pag. 103.* And that those errors, which were but few in the Prelates time, were now many in theirs. Their note on *Rom. 16. 17.* *Mark them which cause divisions, &c.* is, that we are not only required to avoid their Doctrines, but their persons: For proof of which, is quoted *1 Tim. 6. ch. 3, 4, 5. Pag. 104.*
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The Doctrine of a Toleration of all Religions is contrary to Godliness, and opens a door to *Libertinism*, and Prophaneness. And that all Doctrines, are to be avoided, that hold forth a strictness above what is written. And therefore their advice is, that men must be Candidates of a Canonical, not an Apocryphal, strictness. And where God has not a mouth to speak, men must not have an ear to hear, nor an heart to believe. *Pag. 105.*

That Doctrine which crieth up Purity to the ruin of unity, is contrary to the Doctrine of the Gospel. And they conclude with this affirmation; That, certainly, the Government that carrieth, in the front of it, a Toleration of different Religions, and is not sufficient to keep the Body of Christ in unity, and purity, is not the Government of Christ. And again, That Doctrine which is contrary to the rule of Faith, or any duty required in the *ten Commandments*, or to any petition of the *Lords Prayer*, is not a Doctrine of Christ, and therefore to be rejected. *Pag. 107.*

Nay, they complain that, then, they were an Hypocritical Nation, and the people

people of Gods wrath, because they had been Truce-breakers, Self-lovers, Traytors, false Accusers, and all under the specious form of Godliness; Nay, if any will read over the Book, they will, by their own confessions, prove some of the wickedest people under the Cope of Heaven. We are, say they, Proud, Secure, Liars, Swearers, and forswearers, Murderers, Drunkards, Adulterers, and Oppressors; We have not learned Righteousness, but Unrighteousness, by all the judgments of God: We are worse and worse, by all our deliverances: We have spilt the blood of Christ in the Sacrament, by our unworthy Receiving: Nay, after all this long Catalogue of sins, they tell us that it would be too long to reckon all the particular relative iniquities of the party; of Magistrates, Ministers, Husbands, Wives, &c. And they conclude this with those expressions, *Isai. 1.* from the 5th Verse, onwards; *Ah sinful people! A people laden with iniquity, a seed of evil doers, &c. vid. Pag. 109, &c.* Let God, and other men, now judge out of their own mouths; For 'tis not my business to judge any man.

But to go on, a little more, with that
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Orthodox Doctrine which this Provincial Assembly there exhibited; They say farther, (*Pag. 119.*) : That it is the duty of all Christians to enjoy the Ordinances of Christ in Unity, and Uniformity as far as it is possible; Because the Scripture calls to Unity, and Uniformity, as well as to Purity, and Verity: And that not only because it is not impossible in it self; but for that God has promised, that his *Children shall serve him with one heart, and with one way, and with one shoulder*: And for this they quote the Prophets, among the *Jews*, predicting the glorious flourishing of the Gospel, *Jer. 32. 39. Zeph. 3. 9. Zech. 14. 9.* As also our blessed Saviours prayer, *That we may all be one, as the Father was in him, and he in the Father, Joh. 17. 21.* That so, from the unity and love of his Disciples, *the world might believe that God had sent him.* And therefore this Provincial Assembly concludes, That nothing hinders the propagation of the Gospel so much, as the divisions and separation of Gospel Professors. Nay, they farther say: That if all men cannot come up, in all particulars, to the Uniformity of the Church; Yet they ought to hold Com-

munion together in what they agree;
And to prove this, they quote the Text
which that very worthy and Reverend
Person, Dr. *Stillingsfleet*, the present
Dean of *St. Pauls Church*, chose to
Preach his most excellent Sermon from,
before the *Lord Major* of this Honourable
City, against which so many pens
have been sharpened and blunted too,
*Phil. 3. 16. Nevertheless, whereunto we
have already attained, let us walk by the
same Rule; Let us mind the same thing.*
Nay, they add, also, that this was the
practice of the Primitive Christians;
Which is the very same thing which the
Reverend Dean endeavoured to prove;
And yet men, pretending to the same
Principles with these Provincial Di-
vines, either as plainly endeavour to de-
ny, such things, or (according to the cu-
stom of *Pharisees*, & *Jesuits*) attempt to
evade them by face, or distinction. The
Lord help me, who am a poor simple
man, when persons of wonderful, and
miraculous, education, and learning,
thus talk in and out. Nay, farther, in
the matter of forbearance; the Provin-
cial Divines desire, only, that all things
may be tolerated that consist with the
fundamentals of Religion, the Power of
God.

Godliness, and with that Peace which Christ has established in his Church. But to Preach up, or practise, that which makes Ruptures in the Body of Christ, (I use here their own language) and to divide Church from Church, and to set up Church against Church; and to gather Churches out of true Churches, and to hold Communion in nothing: This (say they) we think hath no warrant out of the word of God, and will introduce all manner of confusion in Churches and families; And not only disturb, but, in a little time, destroy the power of Godliness, Purity of Religion, Peace of Christians; Nay, set open a wide gap to bring in Atheism, Popery, Heresie, and all manner of wickedness. And therefore this Provincial Assembly of the Ministers of the Province of *London*, concludes, *Pag. 121.* with that description which Dr. Ames gives of the mischievousness, and sinfulness of Schism, (*lib. 5. Cap. 21.*) Schism, (saies he) is a grievous sin. (1.) Because it is against Charity to our Neighbour. (2.) Because it is against the Edification of him who makes the Separation, in that he deprives himself of Communion in Spiritual good. (3.)

Because it is against the honor of Christ; in that, as much as in it lyeth, it takes away the Unity of his Mystical Body; And (4.) It makes way to Heresie, and separation from Christ; from whence they conclude that Schism is a sin by all good men to be abhor'd. Nay if we look into *Pag. 112.* we shall find that when men separate from what they acknowledge to be a true Church, 'Tis Schism: And to set up a Church against a Church, and, as the Ancients call'd it, Altar against Altar; This is the weakning the hands of the Church, hindering the glorious work of Reformation, causing the building of Gods House to cease, and is a Deformation, instead of a Reformation. Upon such a dismal state, and farther prospect of worse times, (if any could be so) within less than a year after the Throne followed the downfall of the Episcopal Church of *England*; these *London* Ministers, gathered together in a Provincial Assembly, thus exhort the people (*Pag. 110.*) After their being humbled for the evils that so much abounded, (for which as they say, even those in their daies of Reformation the Earth mourned, and the

the Heavens were black over them) when they had mourned seriously, every one a part; Their desire and advice, to them is this; That you would put away the iniquity that is in your hand; That you would be tender of the Oaths which you have taken, and those which may be offered to you; That you would prize the Publick Ordinances, and reverence your Ministers; That you would sanctifie the Sabbaths, and hate Hypocrisie, and self-seeking; That you would receive the love of the truth, lest God give you over to believe lies; That you would not trust to your own understanding, lest God blind your understanding; That you would conform to the truths you already know, that God may discover to you the truths ye do not know; That ye would not have such itching ears, as to heap to your selves Teachers, nor embrace any Doctrines for the persons sake; That ye would seek the truth, for the truths sake, and not for any outward respects; That ye would study Catechism more diligently, & by degrees be led on to perfection; *And let every one that nameth the name of Christ, depart from iniquity.* These were the excellent exhortations of a Province of Divines, then separated from the Episcopal Church of
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England; And why should not such admirable instructions, and advice be prevalent in this paper, since they are transcribed from their own? To conclude therefore in the language of this Provincial Assembly, If we are a true Church of Christ, (which the late Doctrine of occasional Communion sufficiently proves) and Christ holdeth Communion with us, why do any separate from us? *If we are the Body of Christ*, do not they who separate from the Body, *separate from the Head also*? If the Apostle calls those divisions in the Church of *Corinth*, by the name of *Schisms*, (*1 Cor. i. 10.*) Though Christians there did not separate into divers formed Congregations of several Communion in the *Sacrament of the Lords Supper*; May not your Secession from us, and the profession that you cannot join with us as members, and setting up Congregations of another Communion be more properly called *Schisms*? Especially when Churches were gathered out of Churches, as this Provincial Assembly there complains. If any are willing to see more of this, let them peruse the Book; *And the good God give us all a right understanding in all things.*

